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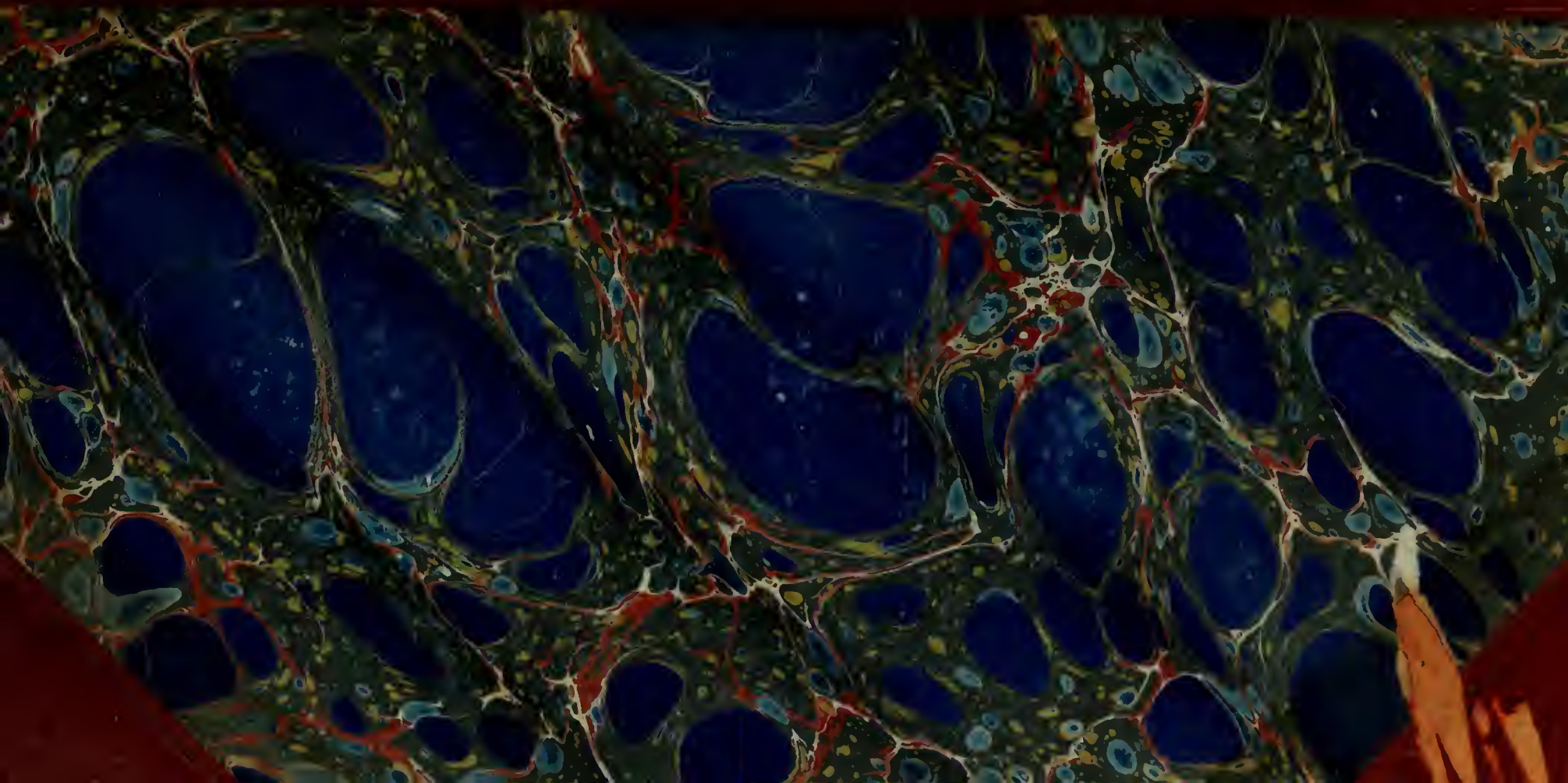

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"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE

ARGOSY.

EDITED BY

MRS. HENRY WOOD.

VOLUME XX.

July to December, 1875.

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THE ARGOSY.

JULY, 1875.

A SECRET OF THE SEA.

By the Author of "In the Dead of Night"

CHAPTER XIX.

POD'S REVELATION.

MISS LLOYD pleaded a violent headache as an excuse for her non-attendance at the breakfast-table the morning after the scene between herself and Gerald in the back drawing-room. She felt as if she could not face anyone for a little while; but, more than all, the possibility of meeting Gerald frightened her. To have gone in to breakfast, and have found him there, would have set her heart fluttering and have brought the tell-tale colour to her cheeks, and would almost infallibly have betrayed her secret to everyone. No: she felt as if she could not meet anyone just yet—that she did not want to meet anyone. She asked for no greater happiness at present than to sit alone by her dressing-room fire, and live over again in memory last night's wondrous scene. She had only to shut her eyes, and every word, and look, and tone came back to her with the most realistic force. What a change three short minutes had wrought in her life! She seemed to have lived a hundred years since yesterday morning; or, rather, the Eleanor Lloyd of yesterday was dead and buried: dead and buried because the poor creature had not known what it was to love!

It was, indeed, like the beginning of a new life to her. "To think that I have been loving him all along, and did not know it!" she said to herself, with a little laugh. "I wonder how long it is since he first found out that he loved me. I will make him tell me all about it after awhile." Then her cheeks flushed, and her heart beat faster at the thought of all that such a sweet possibility implied. "How glad I am that he is poor and I am rich!" she said. "All that I have shall be his. My money will lend wings to his ambition." Then came the thought: "When shall I see him again, and what will he say when I do see him?" She

felt that she dreaded and yet longed for the time to come when they should meet again. It would be trying enough to have to meet him in the company of others, but the thought of encountering him alone, while sending a delicious thrill through her, made her quake with fear. On one point she was quite determined: she would shun a private interview with him as long as possible. She was quite aware that such an interview must take place sooner or later, but it should be altogether of his seeking, not of hers. She knew her own weakness. She knew that whenever Mr. Pomeroy should say to her, "Eleanor, I love you, and I want you to become my wife," all power of resistance would be taken from her, and that she should have no alternative but to yield. At present she had not yielded, and she would try to keep out of his way for a little while longer. When next he should encounter her, the spear of his love would smite her, and she must needs become his bondswoman for ever.

Lady Dudgeon sent some breakfast upstairs, and, by-and-by, she made her appearance in person. She wanted to satisfy herself that there was nothing seriously the matter with Miss Lloyd. It was but a simple headache, Eleanor informed her. "But you are slightly feverish, child," persisted her ladyship,—"and you look as if you had not had enough sleep;" which statement was true enough. Some sensible young ladies there are whose healthy slumbers not even the imprint of love's first kiss upon their lips has the slightest power to disturb; but not one of such strong-minded maidens was our foolish Eleanor.

"I will look up again about eleven," said her ladyship, "and if you are not better by that time I shall make you up a little mixture of my own."

Eleanor promised herself that she would be better by that time, as her ladyship's mixtures—she prided herself on being able to physic all her household without calling in the doctor—had the invariable property of being excessively nauseous.

She hugged herself with a little shiver of delight when she was left alone again to think her own thoughts. What a surprise it would be to Lady Dudgeon—and, indeed, to everybody! Of course she would be told that Mr. Pomeroy had only made love to her because she was rich: but in her own heart she knew so much better than that!

All at once it struck her that there were one or two notes she ought to write this morning; so she went to her davenport, and took pen and paper; but, somehow, her thoughts would go wool-gathering, and the notes refused to get themselves written. Then she began to scribble on the sheet before her. She wrote her own name several times over, and then, without knowing it, she found that she had written "John Pomeroy." Really it looked very nice. Then the question put itself to her: "How should I have to address him in case he were to ask me to write to him? Then she wrote, "Dear Mr. Pomeroy;" but that would

be too formal as between engaged people. Then she tried, "My dear John," and "My darling John;" decided improvements both. Then, with the tip of the pen between her lips, and her head a little on one side, she studied the general effect of what she had written. Not satisfied with that, and being quite sure that she was all alone, she tried the effect of speaking the magic words aloud—though, indeed, it was little more than a timid whisper. Every syllable spoken thus was full of hidden music. Then she took up the pen again, and, hardly conscious of what she was doing, she wrote, "My own dear husband." But this was too much. With a little cry, and a sudden blush, she crumpled up the paper, ran across the room, and dropped it into the fire. Next moment she thought she heard the sound of voices. She went to the door, opened it softly, and listened.

It was as she had thought. Sir Thomas and Mr. Pomeroy were talking together on the floor below. She could not make out what they were talking about: she did not want to do that: all that she wanted was just to hear the sound of Pomeroy's voice. How strangely it thrilled her this morning to hear that voice again which she could already have singled out from ten thousand others; and to hear which, was, for her, to hear a sweeter music than could have been distilled from all the other sounds in the Universe!

The last time she had heard that voice was when it spoke to her. What were the words? "If I could only tell you how much I love you!" It was to her those words were spoken—to her, Eleanor Lloyd! But surely it was not yesterday, but long, long years ago, that she had heard them! She felt already as if she had loved him all her life.

And then his lips had pressed hers, once—twice—thrice! That, indeed, was something fresh: the revelation of a new life! And then his arms had twined round her—strong, comforting—and had pressed her to his bosom as if she were a little child. And in that one timid glance which she had shot up into his eyes, had she not seen there depths of tenderness and devotion that were to be hers—hers alone—through all the days of her life yet to come? What a happy, happy girl she was this morning!

She was quite startled to hear the clock strike eleven. How quickly the morning had flown! Lady Dudgeon came up to see how she was, but with her came Eleanor's particular friend, Miss Lorrimore, who announced, in the impetuous way usual with her, that she had come to fetch Eleanor away for a couple of days. Eleanor was by no means loth to go. It was as if a door of escape had suddenly opened for her. In half an hour she was ready, Lady Dudgeon's mild opposition being over-ruled by the two girls without compunction.

Miss Lorrimore's ponies had been waiting all this time. As she was being driven through the avenue, Eleanor's quick eyes saw Sir Thomas

and Mr. Pomeroy walking together in one of the side-paths a little distance away. "I should like to stop and speak to Sir Thomas," said Miss Lorrimore. "No, no; don't stop!" said Eleanor; "but drive on faster, if you love me." The gentlemen raised their hats, Eleanor fluttered her handkerchief for a moment, and that was the last that she and Gerald saw of each other for some time to come.

In the first place, Eleanor's visit to Miss Lorrimore, instead of being for two days only, extended over five. In the second place, when she did get back to Stammars, she found that Gerald was away in London on business for Sir Thomas. This was a little disappointment to her, for by this time she was growing impatient to see him again. She did not like to ask how soon he was expected back, and no one volunteered to tell her. How bitterly she blamed herself now for running away from him! What a strange, flighty girl he must take her to be! Perhaps, as she had so deliberately run away from him, he would not think her worthy of further notice, and would regard all that had happened between them as nothing more than a foolish dream. This thought was almost unbearable, and now was Eleanor as wretched as she had been happy before. But to be frequently wretched and miserable is part of the penalty incurred by all who are so weak-minded as to fall in love. Such people are not to be pitied.

Gerald, on his side, being smitten with the same disorder, was subject to the same exaltations and depressions, had his hours of fever and his hours of chill. At one time he felt sure that Eleanor loved him a little in return: had he not seen, or fancied that he saw, a world of love and trust in her eyes during those few brief seconds when she had let him press her to his heart? At another time he felt sure that his roughness and impetuosity had frightened her, that she was staying away from Stammars on purpose to avoid him, that he had offended her past recovery. It was almost a relief to be sent up to London on business by Sir Thomas, who being about this time confined to his room with a severe cold, was obliged to make use of Gerald in various ways. Gerald hoped that by the time he got back from town Eleanor would have returned to Stammars, in which case he had quite made up his mind that he would lose no time in deciding his fate once for all. In his more hopeful moments it was very pleasant to him to think that Eleanor had learned, or was learning, to love him for himself alone. As a poor man he had wooed her, and as a poor man he should win her. He often speculated as to what would be the effect upon her of the news which he must of necessity tell her before he could make her his wife. In the first place, he could not marry her under a false name. He must necessarily tell her that her name was not Eleanor Lloyd, but Eleanor Murray. Then would follow, as a matter of course, her father's story, which would, in its turn, elicit the fact that, as Jacob Lloyd had died without a will, Eleanor had no right to a single sixpence of the property

he had left behind him. Next would have to come the telling of everything to Ambrose Murray. Last, but not least, would come the revelation to Eleanor that the man she was going to marry was not John Pomeroy, but Gerald Warburton. One fact he would, if it were possible to do so, keep from her till after their marriage: he would not let her know that he was the heir to Jacob Lloyd's property—to the wealth which she had all along believed to be hers. It was his fancy that she should marry him in the belief that he was a poor man. All the greater would be her after surprise.

It so fell out that a couple of days after Eleanor's return from her visit to Miss Lorrimore, and while Gerald was still absent from Stammars, Mr. Pod Piper, whom it is hoped the reader has not quite forgotten, was sent there with certain papers that required Sir Thomas's signature. Having taken the papers into the library, Pod was told to go and amuse himself for half an hour, by which time the documents would be ready for him to take back to Mr. Kelvin.

Pod was one of those people who never find much difficulty in amusing themselves. His first proceeding was to make his way to the kitchen and ask whether they had got any cold sirloin and strong ale with which to refresh a weary wayfarer. Pod was not unknown at Stammars, and his needs were duly attended to. After that, he strolled into the garden, and ensconcing himself behind a large laurel, where he could not be seen from any of the windows, he proceeded to light and smoke the remaining half of a cigar which he happened to have by him. Cigars being a luxury that he could not often indulge in, Pod generally contrived to make one last him for two occasions.

When the cigar was smoked down to the last half-inch, Pod thought that he would take a turn round the conservatory, and as he felt sure that the crusty-looking old gardener had never seen him before, it struck him that there would be no harm in trying to impress the old fellow with the belief that he was being honoured by the presence of some guest of distinction—"some young swell of the upper ten," as Pod put it to himself. Accordingly, before opening the glass door of the conservatory, Mr. Piper produced from his pocket a pair of rather dingy lavender kid gloves, one of which he put on, leaving the other to be carried in an easy, dégagé style such as would seem natural to a young fellow whose uncle was a marquis at the very least. The fact, however, was, that the gloves were odd ones, and as they were both intended for the right hand, Pod could not conveniently wear more than one of them at a time.

Pod's next proceeding was to give his hat a careful polish with the sleeve of his coat, and then to push it a little more on one side of his head than he usually wore it. Then one end of his white handkerchief was allowed to drop negligently out of his pocket. Then, from some mysterious receptacle, Pod produced an eye-glass. Many weary hours

had he spent in his attempts to master the nice art of wearing an eye-glass easily and without conscious effort. But as yet his labours could hardly be said to be crowned with success, seeing that the glass would persist in dropping from his eye at awkward moments, when, by all the laws that regulate such matters, it ought to have been most firmly fixed in its orbit.

As soon as Pod's little arrangements were completed, he opened the door, and marched boldly into the conservatory. The old gardener glared sulkily at him, as gardeners have a habit of doing when any one invades what they look upon as their private domains. But Pod, caring nothing for sulky looks, swaggered up and down the flowery aisles, making believe, glass in eye, to read the different Latin labels, as though he thoroughly understood them. Presently, he caught sight of a little group of people crossing one of the garden-paths outside. Looking more closely, he saw that one of them was Olive Deane; the others, judging from their appearance, were her two pupils and some friends of theirs.

The sight of Miss Deane seemed to surprise Mr. Piper into temporary forgetfulness both of his eye-glass and the Latin labels. He sat down in a brown study, and was still sitting, deep in thought, when, hearing one of the doors clash, he looked up and saw Miss Lloyd coming slowly towards him. "Why, here she is—her very self! And isn't she a beauty!" he muttered. "No time like the present. I'll tell her now." And with that his eye-glass and his lavender gloves were next moment smuggled safely out of sight.

Although Pod had at once recognized Eleanor, it is doubtful whether she would have recollected him had he not spoken to her. "Beg pardon, but are you not Miss Lloyd?" he said, as she reached the spot where he was standing.

"Yes, I am Miss Lloyd," she said, with a smile, for Pod, much to his own shame and disgust, was blushing violently. "Have you anything to say to me?"

"Yes, miss, something that I should have told you long ago if you had not been away in London. You don't recollect me, but I shall never forget you. My name is Podley Piper, and I'm in Mr. Kelvin's office at Pembridge."

Had Pod been an articled clerk, instead of being the office youth he was, he could not have mentioned this fact with an air of greater dignity. "It was you, miss, who were so kind to my mother last spring, when she was ill. You sent her wine, and jelly, and coals, and you weren't above going and seeing her yourself. She would never have come round as soon as she did if it had not been for your kindness—and I thank you for it with all my heart!"

"It is very little that you have to thank me for," replied Eleanor. "I hope your mother has had no return of her old complaint?"

"She is well and hearty, thank you, miss, and she often says that if all rich people were like you, the world would be a pleasanter place to live in than it is."

"I am glad to have seen you, and to have news of your mother," said Eleanor. "But I think you said you had something to tell me."

"Yes, miss, I have. Do you know my governor, Mr. Kelvin?"

"I have known Mr. Kelvin for several years. But why do you ask?"

"Then perhaps you know a friend of Mr. Kelvin—Mr. Pomeroy?"

"I certainly am acquainted with a gentleman of that name. But I did not know that Mr. Pomeroy was a friend of Mr. Kelvin."

"Oh yes, but he is. It was through Mr. Kelvin that he was made secretary to Sir Thomas."

"Indeed!" said Eleanor, coldly. "But that is hardly the news you have to tell me?" Despite herself, she began to tremble a little. What was this strange-looking boy about to tell her?

"I'm coming to the news presently," said Pod. "May I ask whether Miss Olive Deane is still at Stammars?"

"Miss Deane is still here."

"Of course you know that she is Mr. Kelvin's cousin."

"I believe I have been told so."

"Well, Miss Lloyd, one day I happened to overhear a conversation in Mr. Kelvin's office between Miss Deane and Mr. Pomeroy, in which your name was rather frequently mentioned."

"My name mentioned in a conversation between Miss Deane and Mr. Pomeroy! What could they have to say about me?" She was trembling more than ever now, and to hide it was obliged to sit down on the chair recently vacated by Pod.

"You know, miss," said Pod, with an air of self-justification, "I am not in the habit of listening to conversations that it is not intended I should hear, and it was only the mention of your name, and a certain remark that was made about you, that made me do so in this case."

"But they could have nothing to say about me—nothing, that is, of any consequence either to you or me."

"Well, I can only say this, that neither Miss Deane nor Mr. Pomeroy mean any good to you, and I want to put you on your guard against them."

Eleanor could not speak for a moment or two. What terrible abyss was this which seemed opening at her feet? "But what do you mean by putting me on my guard against Miss Deane and Mr. Pomeroy?"

"What I say is this: beware of both of them! Both of them are snakes in the grass."

"You are a very strange young man, and cannot surely know what you are saying," urged poor Eleanor. "I am quite sure that there must be a great mistake somewhere."

"No mistake whatever, miss. If I leave my situation to-morrow I'll

tell you. Mr. Pomeroy had been away from England for some time, and when he first came to my master, about four months ago, he hadn't a penny in the world."

"Possibly not," said Eleanor, coldly. "But poverty is no disgrace."

"He came to Mr. Kelvin, who had known him years before, and Kelvin lent him fifty pounds."

"Friends should always help each other. But how came you to know all this?"

"Through the conversation that I overheard between Miss Deane and Mr. Pomeroy."

"Really," said Eleanor, as she rose, "I fail to see in what way these details concern me. I must wish you good morning, Mr. Piper, and ——"

"One moment, if you please," said Pod, earnestly. "You don't know why Mr. Pomeroy was made secretary to Sir Thomas, do you?"

"That is a point about which I have never troubled myself to think: it does not concern me."

"He was sent to Stammars that he might have a chance of marrying an heiress."

"Ah!"

"And that heiress was to be you, miss."

"Me!" Eleanor sank down in the chair again.

"Miss Deane said you were worth twenty thousand pounds, and as Mr. Pomeroy was so poor, why shouldn't he pretend to fall in love with you and marry you?"

There was a dead pause. The plashing of a tiny fountain hidden somewhere among the foliage was the only sound that broke the silence: it was a sound that will dwell in Eleanor's memory as long as she lives.

"Are you quite sure that you did not dream all this?" she said, speaking very faintly.

"Every word I tell you is as true as gospel. I took down the conversation in shorthand, and I've got my notes at home now. The grand point was this: Mr. Pomeroy was to have the place of secretary to Sir Thomas, so that he might be near you and have an opportunity of making love to you. You are not offended with me, miss?"

"Offended! Oh, no; but I am sure you have made some mistake."

"I thought it only right to put you on your guard against those two —Miss Deane and Mr. Pomeroy. And there's my governor, too, he's as thick in the plot as the others. It was he who found the other one the money to buy clothes with to come here, so that he might look like a gentleman. It's your money, miss, that's the temptation," concluded Pod, philosophically. "Rich people never know who are their real friends."

Eleanor did not answer. She no longer seemed to see him, or even

to be aware of his presence. There was a dumb, despairing, far-away look on her white face that filled him with awe. He felt that he dare not say another word. Leaving her there, sitting on the chair, one hand tightly interlocked in the other, staring into vacancy with wide-open eyes that seemed to see nothing, he stole away on tip-toe, and presently, with a great sense of relief, found himself in the fresh air outside.

CHAPTER XX.

A GLASS OF BURGUNDY.

The cold caught by Sir Thomas Dudgeon a few days after the ball at Stammars culminated in an attack of low fever, which confined him to the house for some weeks, and which delayed the return of the family to Harley Street at the date fixed upon.

While the baronet was thus shut up within doors, a certain estate was advertised for sale, of which he thought he should like to become the purchaser. Being unable to attend to the matter in person, he put it into the hands of Mr. Kelvin, who, in the course of the business found himself, much against his will, under the necessity of going to Stammars, from which place he had kept himself carefully aloof for several months.

The day before going there, Kelvin mentioned his intended visit to his mother, mentioned it casually in conversation, and as a matter of no consequence, for the old lady knew of no disinclination on his part to go to Stammars, and had not the remotest suspicion that he had ever been in love with Miss Lloyd.

As soon as Matthew had left the room, Mrs. Kelvin sat down and penned a short note to Miss Deane, informing her that her cousin would be at Stammars on the morrow, and asking her to see him and write back her opinion as to how he seemed in health, whether better or worse than when Olive saw him at Easter.

The note reached Olive by the evening post while she was correcting her pupils' exercises. She read it through once and then put it quietly into her pocket: but she went up to her room earlier than usual, and it was long past midnight before she went to bed. She put out her candle—she always used to say that she could think better in the dark—and drew up her blinds, and paced her room for hours in the dim starlight. This visit of her cousin to Stammars might mean so much to her!

The main reason which, in the first instance, had induced her to come to Stammars no longer existed. Her scheme for bringing Pomeroy and Miss Lloyd together, that they might have an opportunity of falling in love with each other, had succeeded almost beyond her

expectations. She had partly seen, and partly overheard, what had passed between them that evening in the back drawing-room. Her belief, as regards Pomeroy, was that he was merely playing a part in order to win an heiress for his wife; but that Eleanor was really in love with Pomeroy, she felt equally sure. So sure, indeed, was she on this point, that all fear of Matthew Kelvin ever inducing Miss Lloyd to change her mind and look upon him with kindly eyes had vanished from Olive's mind for ever. Let her cousin marry whomsoever he might, there was one person in the world who would never become his wife, and that person was Eleanor Lloyd, on that point there could be no possible mistake. So far, she had cut her way clearly and boldly towards the end she had had in view from the first. But much remained for her still to do. In the first place, she must satisfy her cousin that all chance of his ever winning Miss Lloyd was utterly at an end. This there would not be much difficulty in effecting; but something much harder would remain to be achieved before she could hope to benefit in the least by all that had gone before. There was no hope of her ever being able to win her cousin's affections, no hope that he would ever ask her to become his wife, unless the opportunity were given her of seeing him and being with him daily—unless, in fact, he and she were living under the same roof. But how was such an end to be accomplished? True it was that she might, on some easily-invented pretext, throw up her position at Stammars, and go and live with her aunt for a week or two while looking out for another situation. But that was not what she wanted. Her next situation might take her a couple of hundred miles away, and so separate her from her cousin for years—for ever. It were better to remain at Stammars than run such a risk as that. True it was that she had lived under her cousin's roof for several weeks before coming to Stammars, without, to all appearance, advancing one single step towards the end she had in view. But she flattered herself that her failure at that time was altogether due to the fact that her cousin had not as yet, whatever he might say to the contrary, given up all expectation of one day inducing Miss Lloyd to change her mind in his favour. In any case, his recent disappointment sat too freshly upon him: his hurt was not yet healed, the image of Miss Lloyd was still too constantly in his mind's eye, for any real hope to exist that he might have his eyes and his thoughts diverted elsewhere. But that time was now gone by. Mr. Kelvin was no love-sick school-boy, to go whimpering through the world because he could not have the particular toy on which he had set his mind. When once the first sharp pang was over, when once he knew for a fact that the heart he had one day hoped to call his was irrevocably given to another, pride would come to the aid of his natural strength of character, and he would school himself to forget, would school himself to obliterate from his memory, all traces of so painful an episode.

Then, if ever, would come Olive's chance ; then, if ever, would come the opportunity so intensely longed for. But, in order to avail herself of that opportunity, in order to put it to all the uses of which it was capable, it was imperatively necessary that she should be there—on the spot. Thus, to-night, the problem which Olive Deane had set herself to solve—the problem which kept her out of bed half the night and awake the remaining half, was, "How, and by what means, is it possible for me to make myself an inmate of my cousin's house, so that he may have an opportunity of learning to love me?"

Just as the first ghostly glimmer of daylight was begining to creep across the sky, she sat up in bed, moved by a thought against which she had been fighting faintly all night long, but which had conquered her at last. "If only he were ill!" was the thought that at last clothed itself with definite words in her mind. "If only he were ill!" she said aloud, staring out with blank, sleepless eyes at the dawn. "Ay—if! Then I could claim to nurse him, then I could obtain a place by his side. He has no sister, his mother is old and in firm, and no one else is so near to him as I am. And why should he not be ill?"

She went down to breakfast with dark-rimmed eyes and sallow cheeks, and looking as if she had aged five years in a few short hours. Still the same question kept repeating itself like a refrain in her mind, "Why should he not be ill?" Over and over again, as though it were a question asked by some other than herself, it seemed to be whispered in her ear ; and even when she was hearing her pupils their lessons, it seemed to write itself in blood-red letters across the book in her hand.

Matthew Kelvin reached Stammars about noon. Olive had asked one of the servants to let her know when he arrived. Then she wrote a little note and sent it to him in the library, where he was closeted with Sir Thomas. "Come and have luncheon with me in my room as soon as your business is over." Then she put on another dress, and laid out her bonnet, mantle, and gloves, so that they would be ready at a moment's notice. She had quite made up her mind that she should go back to Pembridge with her cousin.

Half an hour later, Mr. Kelvin was ushered into her sitting-room, where a comfortable little luncheon was already laid.

"I suppose you would have gone away without coming near me," said Olive, as she held out her hand, "if I had not sent you that note."

"No, indeed," said Kelvin, pleasantly. "Why should you think such hard things of me? Rather a comfortable little place, this of yours," he added, as he looked round ; "but I daresay you feel rather lonely and mopy here at times."

"Very seldom. You know that I am not one who cares for much

society, and so long as I have plenty of books, I content myself tolerably well."

"When do you go back to Harley Street?"

"That all depends on the state of Sir Thomas's health. And that reminds me that I have not yet asked after my aunt."

"Oh, my mother is pretty much as usual, I think. Of course, like all of us, she does not grow younger. I believe she would be better if she didn't fidget herself so unnecessarily about me."

"My aunt does not fidget herself without cause, Matthew. You don't look at all well—hardly as well as when I saw you at Easter."

"There, there! you women are all alike," he said, a little impatiently. "Never mind my looks, but give me something to eat. I believe my drive through the crisp spring air has given me an appetite: and that's more than I've had for ever so long a time. You don't look over bright yourself, Olive," he added, as he sat down at table. "A little bit worried, perhaps—eh?"

"No; I don't know that I have anything particular to worry me."

"How do you and the dowager get on together?"

"Oh, pretty well. She does not interfere a great deal with me, and I keep out of her way as much as possible."

"That's sensible on both sides."

He certainly looked older and more careworn, as he sat there, than she had ever seen him look before. It made her heart ache to look at him. If she could but have comforted him! If she could but have laid his head against her bosom and have kissed back the pleasant light into his eyes, and the sunny smile to his lips, as she remembered them in the days before the shadow of Eleanor Lloyd had ever crossed his path! But that might not be.

"Do you see much of Miss Lloyd nowadays?" asked Kelvin, presently, in as indifferent a tone as he could assume.

"I generally see her at breakfast and luncheon when she is at home. Not often besides."

"She is quite well, I suppose?"

"Quite well, so far as I know. Why should she not be?"

"Anything come of that affair between her and Captain—Captain, what do you call him?"

"Captain Dayrell, you mean. No; I believe the affair is broken off entirely. I have reason to believe that when it came to the point, Miss Lloyd would have nothing more to do with him."

"Ah! what a little coquette she is! If a man like this Captain Dayrell is not good enough for her, what on earth does she expect? I'll take a glass of wine, if you please, Olive."

He had brightened up all in a moment. He looked quite a different individual from the gloomy, careworn man who had entered the room only ten minutes before. "In his heart he loves her still," said Olive

to herself, and her own heart overflowed with bitterness at the thought. From that moment any scrap of compunction that might hitherto have clung to her was flung to the winds.

She poured him out a glass of Burgundy with a hand that betrayed not the slightest tremor, before she spoke. "Is it not possible, Matthew," she said, in that icy tone which she knew so well how to assume when it suited her to do so, "is it not possible that Miss Lloyd's refusal to entertain the proposition of Captain Dayrell might arise from some other motive than mere coquetry?"

"What do you mean?" he asked, quickly and suspiciously. "When you ask an ambiguous question like that, Miss Deane, you have always got the answer to it ready at your tongue's end."

"Thank you, Matthew," said Olive, quietly. "When Miss Lloyd turned her back on Captain Dayrell, is it not possible that she might be influenced in doing so by her liking for some one else?"

Mr. Kelvin's face grew a shade paler, and he did not answer at once. "If you know so much, you can doubtless tell me the rest," he said, at last. "Let us have no more beating about the bush. You can, if you choose to do so, tell me the name of the person for whom you believe Miss Lloyd to have a preference. Who is the man?" His last question might have been a cry wrung from him by his own agony, so sharp and bitter was its tone.

"What will you say if I tell you that it is your friend Mr. Pomeroy?"

"Pomeroy! Eleanor Lloyd in love with Pomeroy!" he cried, as he started to his feet. "No; I will never believe it. It is a lie!"

"A lie, Matthew? Thank you, again. It is but a few evenings ago since I saw—myself unseen—the head of Eleanor Lloyd laid on the shoulder of John Pomeroy: since I saw the lips of John Pomeroy pressed without reproof to those of Eleanor Lloyd. Such is my evidence. Set on it what value you please." He seized a knife suddenly, as though he would have liked to stab her to the heart. But her eyes met his unflinchingly, as she stood opposite to him, and presently he sank back into his chair, and let his arm fall on to the table, and so sat with bowed head for a little, without speaking.

"This is your doing and my mother's!" he said at last, speaking slowly and bitterly. "It was through you this vagabond had the opportunity given him of doing what he has done!"

"How was either I or your mother to know that what has happened would happen?" asked Olive. She felt that the time had not yet come when it would be safe for her to tell her cousin that Pomeroy had been brought to Stammars for the express purpose of falling in love with Miss Lloyd.

"To think of Eleanor Lloyd so far forgetting herself as to fall in love with an adventurer like Pomeroy! It seems impossible."

"You seem to forget that Pomeroy passes here as a gentleman. A

poor one, it may be, but still a gentleman. And if you know anything at all of Miss Lloyd, you must know this, that the fact of Mr. Pomeroy being without a shilling in the world would not influence her estimate of him in the slightest possible degree."

"We will soon strip his fine feathers off him," exclaimed Kelvin, "and expose him for what he really is—an adventurer and a vagabond. I'll go to Sir Thomas this very day, and tell him everything." Olive had quite expected that her cousin would be angry when he heard her news, and would threaten to expose everything to Sir Thomas; but she had kept an arrow in store for such an occasion, which she now proceeded to let fly.

"How inconsistent you are, cousin Matthew!" she exclaimed. "Why has certain news been kept back from Eleanor Lloyd for so long a time? That question you can answer as well as I can. Cannot you, therefore, comprehend how much more complete will be your revenge on this woman who rejected you with contempt and scorn, if, through your agency, she is hoodwinked into marrying a penniless adventurer like Pomeroy, rather than a gentleman and a man of honour like Captain Dayrell? Cannot you, I say, comprehend all this?"

"The question did not strike me in that light," said Kelvin, in the quick way habitual with him when any fresh idea was put before him. "If I have wished once, I have wished a thousand times," he said, "that I had never hidden from Eleanor that which it was my duty to have told her the moment the knowledge came into my possession. But such regrets are useless."

"They are worse than useless," said Olive, in her cold, measured tones, as she looked fixedly at him. There was something either in her words or her look that stung him.

"You think me weak," he said; "but how is it possible for you to understand the thoughts and feelings of a man placed as I am?"

"You will not go to Sir Thomas to-day, as you said you would," was all she answered.

"No, I will not go to Sir Thomas. She rejected me and she has accepted Pomeroy. Let her abide by her choice. Having kept the secret so long, I will keep it a little while longer. Let her find out, when no remedy can avail, that this man sought her for her money alone—that money which belongs to another. Had she been the beggar's daughter of Bethnal Green, I would have made her my wife!"

He had spoken passionately, and he now got up and walked to the window, and stood gazing out of it, as if to hide his emotion.

He had half emptied his glass of Burgundy when he first sat down. Olive now filled it up, while he stood thus with his back towards her, and then, quickly and deftly, from a little phial which she extracted from the bosom of her dress, she let fall into the wine three drops of some thick, dark tincture. Very white, but very determined, was the face that was turned next moment on Mr. Kelvin.

"You have scarcely tasted anything. Are you not going to finish your cutlet?"

"No," he said, as he turned from the window. "My appetite has gone. I can't eat."

"You will, at least, drink this glass of wine. If you cannot eat, you must drink." She took up the glass of Burgundy as she spoke, and handed it to him with a hand that was as steady as his own. He took it without a word, and drank it slowly, to the last drop. Then he gave her back the glass, making a slight grimace as he did so.

"Either my palate is out of order," he said, "or else Sir Thomas's wine-merchant is a vendor of rubbish." Then he added: "I promised that I would give Sir Thomas another look in before I went back, but I'll go first and have a weed in the shrubbery. A quarter of an hour in the fresh air will bring me down to my ordinary business level."

"I shall want to see you again before you go," said Olive. "I have a tiny parcel for you to take to my aunt." Her heart was fluttering so fast that she was obliged to press one hand over it in an effort to still its wild beating.

"All right. I'll look in again for a minute before starting," said Mr. Kelvin, as he took up his hat. He was just about to open the door, when Olive, whose eyes had been anxiously following him, saw him stagger slightly, and lift his hand to his head.

She was by his side in a moment. "What is it, Matthew? Are you not well?"

"It was nothing. Only a sudden giddiness. I shall be better when I get into the fresh air." Then he opened the door and went out.

Olive went to the window, from which place the side-door could be seen by which her cousin would gain access to the grounds. Even her lips seemed to have lost their colour this afternoon. She stood there, rubbing one thin white hand against the other, with a slow, restless motion, as though that were the only outlet she could find for the intense life burning within her.

"It begins to take effect already!" she whispered, as though she were breathing her secret in some one's ear. "He shall take me back with him to Pembridge this very day. When he gets over this foolish passion, as he must do when Eleanor Lloyd is another man's wife, then his heart will turn to me—the heart that once was mine, and that shall be mine again! With me for his wife, all his old, ambitious dreams would spring up again with renewed vigour. He should not live and die a mere country lawyer, as, with Eleanor Lloyd for his wife, he surely would do. Raby House is his already—so his mother told me. He is far richer than the world believes him to be. In a little while he will be in Parliament—and then!—What wild, ambitious dreams are these!—but they are dreams that shall one day become realities, if a woman's will can make them so. There he is in

the Laurel Walk !—He sits down and presses his hand to his forehead. It wrings my heart to see him suffer—but what can I do? How gladly would I suffer instead of him, if thereby I could charm him to my side and keep him there !—It is time to go and get ready for my journey."

Lady Dudgeon had just hunted up Sir Thomas in the library (he had ventured downstairs for an hour this afternoon), in order to point out to him a flagrant error of two shillings in the casting of the butcher's monthly account, when there came a tap at the door, and next moment Miss Deane entered.

"I hope, Lady Dudgeon, you will pardon my intrusion," she said, "but my cousin, Mr. Kelvin, has been suddenly taken ill, and ——"

"Kelvin ill !" burst out Sir Thomas. "What is the matter with him? Where is he?"

"He is in the conservatory, Sir Thomas. A sudden attack—giddiness—nausea. I have ordered the fly to be brought round in which he drove over from Pembridge."

"It's nothing contagious, I hope," said her ladyship. "My two darling pets—where are they?"

"Safe in the schoolroom. But your ladyship need fear nothing on the score of contagion."

"I am sorry I can't go and look after him myself," said the baronet. "Is he well enough to be sent home alone?"

"I was about to ask her ladyship to allow me to go home with him," said Olive, "although, in such a case, I could not promise to get back before to-morrow morning."

"It is very thoughtful on your part, Miss Deane," said her ladyship. "You must go with Mr. Kelvin, by all means."

"Your ladyship is very kind."

"Yes, go, by all means," said Sir Thomas. "A most invaluable man, Kelvin—so clear-headed, and all that—never seems in a muddle, you know—never messes his fingers with the ink when he's writing."

Matthew Kelvin was indeed very ill, worse, perhaps, than Olive Deane had hoped he would be. But, on the other hand, had he not been very ill, no valid necessity would have existed for Olive to accompany him home. He was grateful to her for offering to go with him. It was much nicer to have Olive by his side than one of the Stammars footmen. He had no strength to talk, but they had hardly got out of the park, and well on to the highroad that led to Pembridge, when he took one of Olive's cool hands in both his, and let his head droop on to her shoulder.

"Are you in great pain, dear?" she whispered. She had never called him *dear* before.

"It *is* rather hard to bear," said he, squeezing her hand tightly.

Presently he became aware that she was crying. "Don't cry, Olive," he said: but she could not help it. It made her cry to see him suffer

so much; but none the more on that account did she waver for a single moment in her determination to carry out the scheme on which her mind was so firmly bent.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE STORY OF THE WRECK.

Max Van Duren was accepted on probation as a suitor for the hand of Miss Byrne.

Everything now depended on Miriam's ability to carry out the programme laid down for her by her father. The task thus set before her was repugnant to her feelings in many ways, and yet there was a strange sort of fascination in the thought that she alone had power enough over this man to draw from him a secret that he would reveal to no living soul else. But it was requisite that even she should go to work very carefully in the matter. It was requisite that not the slightest suspicion as to her motives should be aroused in Van Duren's naturally suspicious mind. Time and patience were essentially necessary: to have seemed anxious, or in a hurry, would have defeated everything.

Thus it fell out that, nearly every evening when he was in town, Max Van Duren was admitted for an hour to the society of the woman to whose love-spells he had fallen so easy a victim. It could have been no greater surprise to any one than it was to himself to find such toils woven so strongly about him—to find himself, at fifty years of age, and with all his hard worldly experience, as weak as any schoolboy before the foolish witchery of a pretty face.

Every day his infatuation, for it was nothing less, seemed to grow stronger. While coquetting with him, and leading him on to believe that she really did care a little for him in her heart, she was careful to restrain all lover-like familiarities within the smallest possible limits. She could not prevent his pressing her hand now and then, and she even schooled herself into letting him once and again, and as an immense favour, touch the tips of her fingers with his lips. But that was all. Never once was his arm allowed to insinuate itself round her waist. Never once would she sit alone in the room with him for even five minutes: her father, infirm and deaf as he was, or appeared to be, was always there—a power to be appealed to should the necessity for such an appeal ever arise. Van Duren growled a little occasionally at being so persistently forced to keep his distance, but Miriam was as obdurate as a flint.

"I don't believe you have a heart!" he said to her, rather savagely, one night after she had refused to let him kiss even the tips of her fingers.

"I thought you told me only ten minutes ago that I was the happy possessor of yours," she said, demurely.

"Pshaw! You know well enough what I mean. In any case, you can't be possessed of much feeling."

"I pricked my finger this morning, and it seemed to me that my feelings were very acute indeed. But doubtless you know best."

"I wonder whether you have anything beyond the very vaguest idea of what it is to love."

"Are you not doing your best to teach me? And do you not find me an apt pupil?"

"On the contrary, you are uncommonly dull."

"My natural stupidity, doubtless. But then, you know, some people set up for being teachers who have no right to the name."

"In the present case the teacher's lessons are treated with contempt."

"The teacher expects his pupil to read before she has properly learned to spell: expects, too, to be paid for his services before he has earned his first quarter's salary."

Miriam's tongue had a readiness about it that Van Duren could not match, and in such encounters he was invariably worsted. He liked Miriam all the better in that she was ready of speech and quick of tongue. This bright, clever girl would be his own property before long, and it could not but redound to his credit that his wife should not only have the good looks which go so often without brains, but that she should be keen-witted into the bargain: a woman whom he could introduce to his friends with pride, and with the knowledge that they would envy him his new-found treasure.

Presently Mr. Van Duren's birthday came round, and nothing would satisfy him on this occasion but that he should drive Miriam and her father down to Greenwich, and that they should all dine together at the "Ship." As he wished, so it was agreed.

"It will be a good chance, Miriam dear, for getting out of him what we want to know," said the old man to his daughter when they were alone. "A good dinner, and a glass or two of champagne, will help to loosen his tongue and to keep his suspicions fast asleep. There could not be a better opportunity."

They drove to Greenwich in a close carriage, out of consideration or the delicate state of Mr. Byrne's health. But the old man freshened up wonderfully at the dinner-table, and proposed Mr. Van Duren's health in an eulogistic but somewhat rambling speech, he being evidently of opinion, once or twice, that quite a roomful of guests were listening to him. Miriam at last was obliged to force him gently down into his chair, and tempt him into silence with some grapes. When coffee was brought in he looked vaguely up. "I feel just a little bit sleepy," he said, "and if none of the company objects, I'll just have forty winks in that pleasant-looking chair in the corner. But mind, if

there's going to be any harmony, I'm your man, and *Tom Bowling* 's the song that I'll sing." Three minutes later he was snoring gently, with his bandana thrown over his head, although as yet there were no flies to trouble him.

"Is it too cool to sit out on the balcony?" asked Van Duren.

"I am afraid it is," answered Miriam; "but not perhaps too cold to sit by the open window." She did not want to get out of earshot of her father.

This evening she felt more nervous than she had ever felt before. It was the consciousness of what she was expected to do that affected her thus. She looked a little paler than ordinary, and, by consequence, a little more refined; and as she sat there in her black silk dress, with a little ruffle made of tulle and pink ribbon round her neck, Van Duren vowed to himself that he had never seen her look more thoroughly charming.

"I shall not feel satisfied unless you smoke," she said, as they sat down near the open window. "I have heard you say that you always like to smoke a couple of cigars after dinner."

"But that is a bachelor's vile habit, and one which I am going to learn to give up."

"It will be time enough to give it up when you are no longer a bachelor. Confess, now: did you not smuggle two or three cigars into your pocket before you left home?"

Van Duren laughed. "You must be a witch," he said, as he pulled a cigar-case out of his pocket.

"I am no witch," said Miriam. "I have only found out one of your little weaknesses."

"I wish you could discover my virtues as readily."

"A man's virtues—when he has any—don't require much discovery; he is generally quite ready to proclaim their existence himself. We women know what your sex like. We maintain our empire over you not by flattering you about your virtues, but by studying your weaknesses. But now, smoke."

Miriam struck a fusee, and Van Duren bit the end off a cigar and lighted it. A little table was between them, on which stood a bottle of sparkling hock and two glasses. The evening was closing in, but the sun had not yet set, and the broad bosom of the river lay fair and clear before them, with its steamers, and lighters, and pleasure-boats, and incoming or outgoing ships, passing to and fro unceasingly—a never-ending panorama, abounding with life, colour, and variety.

"I wonder whether you will always be as indulgent to me as you are to-day," said Van Duren, as he exhaled a long curl of fragrant smoke.

"That would depend upon whether you were always as good as you have been to-day."

"I want you, this afternoon," he said, "to tell me where you would like us to spend our honeymoon."

"As we have not yet agreed that there is to be a honeymoon, the question where we shall spend it seems to me slightly premature."

"Let us be like children for once, and make believe. Let us make believe that you and I are going to be married in a month from now, and that I have asked you where you would like to spend the honeymoon."

Miriam did not answer for a few moments, but sat with one finger pressed to her lips, a pretty embodiment of perplexity. "Really, I don't know," she said—"I don't know where I should like to go. So long as I got away to some strange place, I don't think I should care much where it was."

"How would Paris suit you?"

"Yes—yes!" cried Miriam, clapping her hands. "I should like to go to Paris above all places in the world. To see the shops, and the toilettes, and the gay crowds, and—and the hundreds of other attractions: that would suit me exactly."

"Many ladies, at such times, prefer some quiet nook either in the country or at the seaside."

"Yes, prefer to bury themselves alive, in fact. But that would not suit me, however much I might like my husband. In such a case, I am quite certain that by the end of the first week I should begin to think him a great stupid, and I am equally sure that he would already have discovered with what a shallow-pated individual he had mated himself for life. The experiment would be far too dangerous a one for me."

"A very neatly-framed excuse for preferring Paris to Bognor or Bowness," said Van Duren, with a smile.

"How cleverly you unravel my motives! But I think I told you before that I was shallow. Be warned in time!"

"I have never heeded warnings all my life. I have always preferred keeping my own headstrong course."

"In other words, you are obstinate."

"Some of my friends call me pig-headed—but that is sheer malice."

"How beautiful the river looks this afternoon!" said Miriam, a moment or two later. "I never look on an outward-bound ship without feeling a sort of vague longing to be on board her, sailing away into that strange world of which I know so little."

"The chances are that before you had been on board a dozen hours you would wish with all your heart that you were on shore again—especially if there happened to be a capful of wind."

"Oh, I quite believe that. Being a woman, it only stands to reason that I should be both ill and frightened. Men are never either one or the other." Then, in a little while, she added: "Still, nonsense apart, I believe that I should very much like to go a long voyage."

"Unless you chanced to have very pleasant companions, you would

soon grow weary of the everlasting monotony of sea and sky : sky and sea."

"I'm not quite so sure on that point. I cannot conceive that either the sky or the sea is ever really monotonous. And yet you who have travelled so much ought to know far better than I," she added, a minute later, as if correcting herself. "You have travelled much in the course of your life, Mr. Van Duren, have you not?"

"Not so much, perhaps, as you imagine. Still, I have seen something of the world."

"And yet you never talk to me about your travels! You have never told me a single one of your adventures."

"I am not aware that I have any adventures to tell you about," said Van Duren, with an amused expression. "How can a man meet with adventures in these days of railroads and steamboats?"

"Still, you must have encountered something, or seen something, that would be worth telling about."

"Really, my life has been a most prosaic one."

"Have you never shot a lion or a tiger?"

"Certainly not."

"Perhaps you have hunted a wild boar?"

"I have never even seen such an animal."

"Have you ever quarrelled with a man, and then fought a duel with him?"

"I have quarrelled with many men, but have never fought a duel."

"Have you ever been up in a balloon or down a coal-mine?"

"Neither one nor the other."

"Have you ever been pursued by Red Indians, or by wolves, or had a fight with a bear?"

"I have never been so fortunate. I wish, for your sake, that I had."

"Have you ever been shipwrecked?"

Van Duren gave a little start, but did not immediately answer.

He slowly exhaled the smoke, in a long, thin curl, from between his lips before he spoke. "Yes—I have been shipwrecked," he said, at last.

Miriam's merry laugh rang out, and she clapped her hands for glee. "Every man knows some adventure worth telling," she said. "Yours is a shipwreck. I knew that I should find out what it was at last.—And now you will tell me all about it, won't you?" She looked at him with a pretty air of entreaty, and moved her chair a little closer to his.

"There was really nothing about the affair that is worth telling," he said. He was intent, just now, on choosing another cigar out of his case, smelling at and nipping first one and then another. "It was a very trifling piece of business, I assure you."

"Still, it was a shipwreck, and you were in it," urged Miriam. "Of course, if you do not choose to tell me anything about it, I have nothing further to say in the matter."

"You are a little too hasty," said Van Duren, deprecatingly. "If I really thought it would interest you ——" and then he stopped.

"I suppose I ought not to feel interested in such trifles—but I do," said Miriam, with a pout. "After all, it is not so many years since I was a child, and I daresay I have not yet got rid of all my childish tastes. I always did love to read and hear about shipwrecks."

"Then you shall hear about mine," said Van Duren, with more heartiness of tone than he had yet used. He was flattered by her evident interest in himself and his fortunes. There could be no possible harm in telling her the story of the shipwreck: it was only that the telling of it would rouse into morbid activity a snake's nest of terrible recollections, that he would fain have let sleep for ever.

The cloud that had begun to lower over Miriam's face vanished in a moment. "That is really very nice of you," she said. And then she struck another fusee and held it while he lighted his cigar. Van Duren did not speak till he had swallowed a couple of glasses of hock, one immediately after the other.

"As I said before, this shipwreck-story of mine is hardly worth telling. It is true that it seemed serious enough to me at the time, but it is associated with no thrilling adventure or hair-breadth escapes. Altogether, it was a very commonplace affair."

"Still, it was a shipwreck, and there never was a shipwreck yet that wasn't worth hearing about. So now begin, please, and remember that you must tell me all the details, and make a nice, long story of it."

Poor old Byrne, with his handkerchief thrown over his head, and his hands crossed comfortably over his stomach, was still in the middle of his forty winks, and happily oblivious of all terrestrial troubles.

"What I am about to tell you happened many years ago," said Van Duren.

"How many?—a dozen? I like people to be precise in their dates."

"Oh, more than a dozen. Nearly two dozen."

"Shall we put it down, then, that it was about twenty years ago?"

"Yes, that is near enough." There was a perceptible shade of annoyance in his tone as he spoke.

"Now, if you are going to be petulant, I won't speak to you again all the evening. If you knew more about young ladies, and their whims and ways, you would feel flattered by the interest I am taking in your narrative."

"I do feel flattered by your interest," said Van Duren. "But I did not know that you would care for such minute details."

"Little things always interest our sex—our lives are made up of petty details. And now, if you will make a fresh start, I will try not to interrupt you again."

"Well, then, about twenty years ago, more or less, I made up my mind that I would leave England for ever and try my fortune in the New World. A legacy had come to me from an unexpected quarter, and it seemed to me that I could invest my money better in America than in England, and that my chances of making a fortune were greater there than here. I went down to Liverpool with the view of selecting a ship in which to sail. Whilst staying at the hotel there, I fell in with a countryman of my own, whom I had known some years previously, and to whom I had once done some small service. He was now in the shipping-trade, and when he found that I was going to America he offered me a free passage in a vessel, of which he was part owner, that was to sail in a few days for Halifax, Nova Scotia. The offer was too good a one to be refused, and on a certain Saturday morning I found myself, and all my belongings, on board the *Albatross*, dropping gently down with the tide. We had hardly got beyond the mouth of the Mersey, when it began to blow heavily, and by midnight we were in the midst of a terrific gale. The *Albatross* was laden with a general cargo, and I was the only passenger on board. I shall never forget the magnificent sight that met my gaze when I went on deck next morning. Such a scene I never saw before, and I never want to behold again. The wind was still very high, but the sun shone brightly, and the atmosphere was so clear that the Welsh hills, although, in reality, several miles away, appeared quite close at hand. Presently the captain came up, looking very serious. 'I am sorry to tell you that we sprang a leak in the night,' he said, 'and I am afraid we shall have to put back to Liverpool, in order to have it stopped.' An hour later he came to me again. 'The water is gaining on us so fast,' he said, 'that I shall have to make for Marhyddoc Bay, which is the nearest place I know of. I am afraid she would founder before I could get her back to Liverpool.' He then gave orders for the ship's head to be put about, and we made at once for the Welsh coast."

"What a dreadful disappointment for you!" said Miriam. "How annoyed I should have been, had I been in your place."

"My feelings were very bitter ones, I assure you," said Van Duren. "But there was no room for anger: in fact, it was becoming a question whether we should even succeed in saving our lives. Near to the coast as we were, it was doubtful whether the ship would not go down before we could reach it, and the sea was such that it would have been next to impossible for any boat to have lived in it."

"How very dreadful!" exclaimed Miriam, with a shudder.

"Those were moments of intense anxiety for all of us. One of the boats had been stove in during the night; the two remaining ones were

got ready for lowering at a moment's notice. The water in the hold kept rising steadily, and at last the men refused to work at the pumps any longer. We laboured slowly on towards the land, but with every minute the ship seemed to become more unmanageable, and to be sinking deeper in the trough of the sea. We had weathered the corner of a promontory, and were within a quarter of a mile of shore, and in somewhat smoother water, when the captain gave the order to lower the boats. The ship's last moment was evidently at hand, and if we did not want to go down with her, we must hurry into the boats as quickly as possible. 'With close packing they will hold us,' said the captain; 'but it's a precious good job that we haven't far to go.'

"I was not overburdened with personal luggage, but one article I had that I was particularly desirous of saving. It was a small silver-clamped box, and was full of the most valuable property. In fact, I may tell you that inside that box were my whole worldly possessions. I had brought it up from my cabin and placed it on deck ready to be lowered into the boat. 'You can't take that thing with you,' said the mate, sternly, 'and if you don't look sharp, you'll be left behind yourself.' 'But I must take it,' I said; 'it holds everything I have in the world.' 'Can't help that. I tell you, it can't go. Boys, over with him.' And before I knew what had happened, I found myself dropped over the ship's side into the boat, and the remainder of the crew scrambling after me one by one. The captain and the rest of the crew were in the other boat, and had already cast themselves loose from the ship. 'Two hundred—five hundred pounds,' I cried, 'to anyone who will bring that box safely ashore!' 'Hold your tongue, you fool!' cried the mate, 'or else we'll send you to fish for your confounded box at the bottom of the sea;' and with that he pushed away from the sinking ship. I said no more, but sat in dumb despair, hardly caring whether I reached the shore or not. The boat was laden to the water's edge, and I could hardly wonder at the mate's refusal to take my box. 'There she goes!' cried one of the men a few moments later. 'Farewell to the dear old *Albatross!*' cried a second. I lifted up my eyes. Ship and box had disappeared for ever. A quarter of an hour later I landed at Marhyddoc—a ruined man."

"Gracious me! what a dreadful misfortune!" cried Miriam. "So you did not go to America, after all?"

"I did not. It seemed to me that if I had to begin the world afresh, it would be better to do so among friends and acquaintances than among strangers. I did begin it afresh, and the result has proved far more satisfactory than I should have dared to hope."

"Your narrative has interested me very much, Mr. Van Duren," said Miriam. "It will be something for me to think about when I am sitting alone at my work. I shall think of you far oftener than I should have done had you never told me the story of the *Albatross*."

"Then I am indeed repaid," said Van Duren, with fervour. "To live in your thoughts is my highest ambition."

"How papa is sleeping," cried Miriam, suddenly. "He will be awake half the night if I don't rouse him."

The waiter came in with lights, and Miriam shook her father by the shoulder. He awoke querulous and shivering with cold: so, after a hurried cup of tea, they started at once for home. Van Duren sat for a great part of the way with one of Miriam's hands pressed tightly in his. Miriam's soul shrank within her at his touch, but she was obliged to submit. She consoled herself with the thought that only for a very short time longer would the necessity for submitting to his hateful attentions exist. She had wormed out of him the great secret that he had hidden so carefully for twenty long years. The next question was whether any practical use could be made of it.

"Did you hear what passed this afternoon?" asked Miriam of her father as soon as they were alone together in their own room.

"Every syllable of it, my dear, and very cleverly you managed it."

"And now that you have got all this information, what step do you intend to take next?"

"The next step I intend to take is to advertise in the second column of the *Times*."

(*To be continued.*)

THE GREATEST.

WHO is the greatest? Is it he whose sword
Cuts straight a road to glory? He whose feet
Are swiftest in the race for fame: whose seat
Is aye above his fellows at the board?
He who has heaped up countless golden hoard?
Or even he whose life is most replete
With richer stores than oil, and wine, and wheat—
With love, best good that this world can afford?
No: he who follows where his Master led
Through lowly ways; who strives but to fulfil,
By humblest service, all that Master's will.
He is the greatest; so our Lord hath said;
He falls who strains up high to reach renown;
Who stoops shall find the kingdom and the crown.

EMMA RHODES.

RICHARD WAGNER.

"ITALY," cried Felix Mendelssohn, "is a land of art because it is a chosen land of nature. Where there is life and beauty everywhere; in the blue sky, in the sea, and the trees; there is music enough. But the land of the artist is Germany. Long may it live!"

To Germany, then, we must turn our attention. There we find music in the plenitude of youth and vigour, with its entire adequacy to express all the feelings and complexities of human minds in this nineteenth century, living and flourishing in a regular succession of great names. Not only are the traditions of Mendelssohn and Schumann handed on by the respective representatives of their schools, but, within the last thirty years, there has risen up a great movement in the musical world in an entirely new direction. Our readers will at once understand that we speak of the works of Wagner, the so-called Music of the Future; a school to which England has too long remained a stranger; and which, however we may gainsay the extravagance of its pretensions, or doubt the purity of its aims, commands our attention by the surprising manner in which it has laid hold of Germany. It is well known that the whole of this wide-spread movement, with the high degree of influence it has attained, is owing to the genius and efforts of a single individual. Who, then, is this Wagner? What is his music, of which we, in England, hear so much and understand so little? A few words respecting the career of this extraordinary man, and the aim of his theories and works, may not be altogether without interest.

Richard Wagner was born at Leipzig on the 22nd of May, 1813, and was the youngest child of a member of the municipality of that city. Shortly after his birth, his father, who appears to have had the inspection of the police during the French occupation of Leipzig, died, leaving seven children to the widow. The latter afterwards married a painter, formerly an actor, by profession; a circumstance which first brought her family into connection with the stage, and was destined to exercise an important influence upon the future of her sons. In 1826 we find young Wagner, then a scholar of the Kreuzschule of Dresden, giving vent to his first creative impulse in a tragedy, written under the stimulus of the study of Shakespeare. This youthful production seems to have been an accumulation of all the crimes and horrors he could collect. He tells us, in his own memoir, that forty-two persons were murdered in the course of the piece, and, consequently, most of them were obliged to re-appear as

ghosts in the last act, to supply the want of living characters. It is worthy of remark, that not music but the drama first attracted Wagner's enthusiasm, and inspired the first flights of his genius; and it was, further, the hearing of Beethoven's music to "Egmont" that led him to compose a similar accompaniment to his tragedy. Henceforth, music and poetry, whether separately or conjointly, were the spheres of the young composer's attempts; and operas, overtures, and poems, flowed in rapid succession from his fertile pen. Without any regular musical education, without learning even the piano; an instrument which. with characteristic scorn, he disdained as feeble and inadequate to the demands of music; he devoted himself, with passionate ardour, to the study of the great masters: above all, to that of Beethoven; copying out himself the scores of his great instrumental works: "Whistling the concerts and singing the songs, and literally," says a contemporary, "going to bed with the sonatas and awaking with the quartetts."

Greek history and mythology was another subject on which he bestowed laborious study, and to that, as to everything else, he brought the same impetuous energy, the same extraordinary activity of mind, which marked his early years. We find him at this time rushing from one ambitious scheme to another, with "restless spirit, ever seeking something new," as he himself tells us; at one moment, with soaring hopes and splendid prospects; at another, plunged in the lowest depth of misery at the failure of some cherished plan or the non-acceptance of some new composition. Through all, however, he was upheld by the strong assurance of the truth of his vocation, and the firm belief that he was called to something great.

At length, after holding various appointments in the second-rate theatres of North German towns; whether in virtue of his own talent, or his connection with the theatrical profession, to which most of his family now belonged; Wagner married an actress at Königsberg, and soon afterwards settled at Riga as conductor of a theatre: an event which may be considered as marking the close of his Sturm und Draug period.

It was at Riga that he appears to have first shown that efficiency as conductor which, years afterwards, excited the wonder of the crowds assembled at the founding of the Bayreuth Theatre. And doubtless the experience gained there was not thrown away, distasteful as must have been the rehearsal of the most frivolous French and Italian operas, and, yet more, the dealings with inferior singers, who had not the slightest disposition to study carefully the parts assigned to them; who cared far more for the plaudits of the audience than for the rendering of a composer's thoughts. But new schemes were already brooding in Wagner's mind; and, strange as it seems, Paris was the centre to which the most German of all German composers directed

his hopes. Not discouraged by his advances to Scribe—the poet of the Grand Opera—meeting with no response, he resolved to become his own librettist. Lord Lytton's "Rienzi" was the plot on which he fixed for his new work; and bidding farewell to Riga in the autumn of 1839, he embarked, with the half-written opera in his pocket, for Paris, viâ London.

The Fates, however, seemed to have conspired against the success of our composer. All Neptune's storms gathered about the vessel which bore Wagner and his fortunes; and it was not until after nearly a month's tossing and driving in the Northern seas, that he reached London, whence, after a short stay, he proceeded to Paris. Bitter disappointment here awaited him. What was he, a nameless composer, with his mighty plans and high consciousness of his own worth for sole fortune, in that great pleasure-loving city, where Meyerbeer reigned supreme? Wagner soon found to his cost that the desired haven was to be no place of rest to him; and, after many ineffectual attempts to obtain the performance of his now completed "Rienzi," he gave up the struggle in despair, and resigned himself to the pitiful task of earning a wretched subsistence for himself and his family, by the merest drudgery.

This visit to Paris was the darkest period in the history of Wagner's struggle for success. Failure seemed branded on his career:

"Failure crowning failure, failure from end to end."

But his genius was of too real a kind to perish in the deeps of despair, and before many months, a fresh stream of creative impulse broke upon him. The terrors and sufferings of that long sea-passage had not been lost on his impressionable imagination, and it is to that eventful voyage that we owe that most fresh, most delicious, of all Wagnerian operas, the "Fliegende Holländer." This charming little work was written in the short space of seven weeks, during a stay in the neighbourhood of Paris. Poverty and disappointment had failed to crush the divine spark within him; once more he felt himself conscious of the living power in his breast, and with this sense, hope and courage for the future returned.

As a poem alone, the "Fliegende Holländer" testifies to his great skill and merit as a dramatist, and on it he bestowed a pains and love that show how congenial the subject was to him in his present circumstances. Everyone acquainted with the work remembers the awful contrast of the phantom ship, with blood-red sails and ghostly crew, noiselessly guiding its course, to the gay, careless, seaman-life and fresh music of winds and waves, which form the background of the picture—a contrast brought out yet more strikingly in the figure of the shrewd, honest captain, never without an eye to his own interests, as opposing the mournful, black-mantled form of the spell-bound

wanderer, heart-sick with longing for that rest and home which he can never reach. The character of Senta, too, the romantic maiden, in whom compassion for the doomed sailor of her nurse's ballad, rises, at the sight of him, into heroic devotion—and who, when all other means of rescue have failed, throws herself into the raging sea, and, "faithful unto death," wins him the longed-for repose—is one of great dramatic beauty, and she is, perhaps, the most natural and attractive of Wagner's women.

All this is admirably rendered in the accompanying music, which, although certainly containing the germs of the Music of the Future, has much of the old forms which Wagner has since thrown off, while no work of his is more rich in individual beauties. The reader acquainted with the opera will at once recall the stirring melody of the pilot's song, or the "Spinnlied," with its whirring accompaniment of turning spinning-wheels, already so well-known and so popular in England.

While Wagner was seeking consolation for the hardships of life in the active exercise of creative faculty, a sudden turn in the wheel brought him unexpected good fortune. "Rienzi," his first important work, was accepted by the theatre of Dresden, and there performed in October, 1842. This opera, which is, perhaps, more popular from its grandeur as a mere theatrical display than from the beauty of its music, although it contains some fine orchestral pieces, met with a warm reception in Wagner's native Saxony; and soon after its performance, our composer was appointed to the important post of Kapellmeister of the Royal Opera at Dresden. The powers of imagination which had sprung up in days of want and struggling, blossomed out brightly under the new sun of prosperity. First "Tannhäuser" and then "Lohengrin," the two great works on which Wagner's now European fame rests, were the fruit of his residence as conductor at one of the chief centres of German art and culture.

In his choice of a mythical groundwork for the "Fliegende Holländer," Wagner had found the subject-matter best suited to his peculiar genius; allowing as it did of far greater freedom than any historical material. He next proceeded to select a myth of a more exclusive national character, in the shape of the old mediæval legend of Tannhäuser, and great, it must be allowed, is the credit he deserves for having revived a myth of such deep and noble meaning. The composition of the work belongs to the years 1844 and 1845, in the course of which it was performed at Dresden, amid storms of applause which still live in the memory of many, and from which time it has taken its stand among the recognized operas of the German répertoire. In grandeur and unity of ideas, as well as in poetic beauties, "Tannhäuser" fully deserves the high place it has attained. In dramatic effects it is certainly unequalled. We have but to recall such scenes as that in which the knight, escaping from Venusberg, suddenly finds him-

self on the fresh hill-side, with pure sunshine and spring airs about him, and the sweet chime of church-bells, and gay carol of the shepherd-boy ringing in his ear; or that supreme moment when, the soul seeming lost for ever, just as the rosied light of the Venusberg is opening upon him, and the goddess herself rises to beckon him to her arms, the word "Elizabeth" thrills out, and the wild music dies down, the siren-forms vanish, and on the hill-tops the dawn begins to break; and we know that the good has conquered, and the soul is saved. On the other hand, although the overture and other separate pieces justly rank among the most popular of Wagner's compositions, it must be said that, taken solely from a musical point of view, there is a great deal that is monotonous and harsh, and that there is throughout a perhaps too prolonged exercise of the full powers of the orchestra.

Wagner's next great music-drama—for operas, properly speaking, none of his are, and he has long ago discarded the title—was "Lohengrin," the composition of which followed closely on that of "Tannhäuser." The myth was this time taken from the cycle of the Holy Graal, a theme so popular among the mystic poets of mediæval Germany. With an inferior subject to that of "Tannhäuser," Wagner has here achieved a far greater success. In richness of musical harmonies, in pure beauty of melody, "Lohengrin" far surpasses anything he has yet written, or, in our eyes, has since produced, and, besides being the most popular of his dramas in Germany, has won for its author the enthusiastic sympathy of Italy since the memorable day of its first performance at Bologna, and, it seems probable, is yet destined to meet with the same success in our own country. Yet the true Wagnerites tell us that "Lohengrin" is only a stage in their hero's development, and point us on to his later works for the real expression of his principles. These belong to the second period of his life, "Lohengrin" being regarded as the climax of his earlier stage, coming, as it did, at the close of his residence at Dresden, for, before it had even been performed, the restless nature of its author had involved him in political agitation, and after bearing a prominent part in the Revolution of 1848, Wagner was compelled to flee, and was again driven to take refuge in Paris.

But although Prussian soldiery might drive Wagner into exile, they could not crush the children of his brain. Henceforth his works were national property; although their advance into popularity might be slow, their success was sure. It required some time, however, before Wagner became popular; the style was too different from all that had gone before to please at first sight; the public was taken by surprise, and did not know whether to wonder or admire; above all, the musical world was startled and alarmed. Schumann declared himself from the first opposed to Wagner's teaching; but one man there was ever ready, with generous enthusiasm, to lend a helping hand to genius

in any form: the noble-minded, brilliant Franz Liszt. To him Wagner turned, in his now forlorn condition, "seized with compassion," he writes, as he gazed on his "Lohengrin," "at the thought that the music would never sound off the death-pale paper," asking him to look at his drama. Liszt replied that preparations for the performance of "Lohengrin" at the Court Theatre of Weimar, where he had taken the conductor's baton, had already begun; and from that day Wagner found in this great man a faithful friend and helper. "Lohengrin" was followed by "Tannhäuser" and the "Fliegende Holländer," and thus Weimar, where the glorious art-life of Germany had formerly found a home, where Karl August had reigned, and where Goethe and Schiller had lived and died, became the centre of the rising school of music.

It is not our own purpose to give an account of our composer's subsequent career, bringing us, as it would, to the present day, and involving a glance into his private life, of which German critics speak, it must be said, with a freedom not altogether justifiable. It will be sufficient to state that after a retirement in Switzerland of nearly ten years, he has reappeared in the great theatres of Germany, to see his works in the zenith of popularity, and himself hailed as the greatest living master; that his residence is now fixed at Bayreuth, where, under the patronage of an august prince, he is occupied in the erection of a theatre, on a scale stupendous enough to admit of the performance of his last colossal work, and the expenses of which are to be defrayed by subscriptions from his admirers of all nations.

It is to this second period of exile, and the succeeding days of prosperity and success, that the greater part of Wagner's prose works are to be attributed. These writings, to which we cannot but think more importance than necessary is attached both by friend and foe, have served at once to supply his followers with a confession of faith, and to bring obloquy and contempt upon his musical works, by the bold and often arrogant tone of the assertions contained in them. The voluminous nature of these works, as well as their varied character, will prevent our attempting to give any account of them; but a few words on his theory may not be out of place.

The point from which Wagner starts is the insufficiency of music alone to express the ideas and emotions of the human mind. This, Beethoven, the greatest composer of purely instrumental music, acknowledged, when, in the wonderful finale of the ninth symphony, he had recourse to the words of Schiller's "Ode to Joy," to express the whole of his thought, and thus laid the foundation of a new period in the history of music. Henceforth, poetry and music, each of itself inadequate, but together complete, must flow blended in one harmonious union. But to attain this union, the forms of absolute music must be sacrificed; the air and cadenza, the shakes *in altissimo* inserted at the caprice of some all-powerful prima-donna, are to be for ever

abolished; and the truth of dramatic action to be rigidly preserved. The dialogue alone is to be the great instrument in the artist's hands, the direction in which all his energy is to be expended; and thus it is that we arrive at the *music-drama*, which, where assisted by all the splendours of painting, architecture, and the costliest decoration, is to be the highest development of art. It is from the poetic idea starting in the author's mind that the music which is to be its garb and colouring receives the impulse; in the words of Wagner, the composer must be "first a poet, then a musician." An important feature in Wagner's works is the elevation of the orchestra from a mere accompaniment into a ruling power; each situation, every sentiment being reflected in the instrumental parts, just as we find the piano accompaniment made use of in Schubert's songs, and the orchestra occupying a position similar to that of the chorus in Greek tragedy. In connection with this is the introduction of the so-called *leit-motiv* (leading motive), a musical phrase corresponding to the predominant idea of the drama, which recurs in the vocal or orchestral parts, whenever the action of the play recalls the leading thought. Thus, in "Tannhäuser," the leading motive first appearing in the overture consists of the voluptuous strains of the Venusberg, as opposed to the solemn chaunt of the Pilgrims' Chorus, illustrating the conflict of earthly passion with high Christian purity. Throughout the opera we find this phrase recurring, according as each principle gains the ascendant, until at length, after rising to an awful pitch in the last struggle, the wild surging of the violins is conquered by the trumpet-blast, which leads off the grand chorale of Allelulias, proclaiming Tannhäuser's forgiveness. In "Lohengrin" it is the mystic glory of the Holy Graal, ideal of all beauty and holiness in chivalric days, which is revealed to us in the strange sweet violin melody of that marvellous overture, to be afterwards introduced with different variations, according to the action of the drama. In the later works we find this leading motive enlarged upon and developed, till it has become a characteristic principle of the Music of the Future.

Now, in all this there is much that is true and admirable, were it not for the unrestrained lawlessness, the tendency to condemn every other class of music outside his own sphere, which leads Wagner, and with him his followers, into such extravagant assertions. No doubt, a great reform was needed to cleanse the German stage from the innovations of French and Italian opera, and Wagner deserves the gratitude of his countrymen for the unsparing severity with which he has lashed the formal pedantry of *Kapellmeistermusick* on the one hand, and the "dragon of foreign taste" on the other, in his endeavours to establish a really national opera. His protest against the tyranny singers was certainly not uncalled for; but though we agree with him when he says that actors and singers are instruments to reveal the

composer's thought, we think he should recollect they are also human beings, and as such deserve consideration, and may justly object to having their voices destroyed, and their powers of body strained to the utmost, by a composer's love for the marvellous. Again, although the sole aim of music may not be to please the ear, we cannot think it is meant to torture our nerves by the harshest dissonances and broadest violations of the laws of harmony. "I shall never believe," said Hector Berlioz, himself a Futurist, although by no means a bigoted Wagnerite, "that the beautiful is ugly, and the ugly beautiful." And, although Wagner has immeasurably raised the standard of opera text-books, it is, to say the least, not likely that every musical composer hereafter will be born a poet in the same degree as the writer of "Lohengrin."

Of the other accusations brought against Wagner, which are many—for his enemies are as violent and almost as numerous as his partisans—a very frequent one is that which charges his musical compositions with utter absence of melody, an accusation which, it seems to us, such passages as the "Bridal Chorus" in "Lohengrin," or the "Liebeslied" from the "Walkure," should be enough to refute. Another far more serious imputation is that of sacrificing music to dramatic effect, a charge which he has often laid himself open to; so much so, indeed, that it is scarcely unfair to say that music is not the first thing in his works; and in connection with this fact it is curious to remember that it was the stage, not music, which first attracted him as a child. The right conclusion seems to be: Wagner is a great genius, his creative gifts, both in music and in poetry, are of the highest order; this, we think, can only be disputed by those who cannot separate Wagner the composer, from Wagner the writer and the man. But, on the other hand, even should we accept the assertion of the Wagnerites, that the music-drama is the highest form of music, we no more understand why other forms are to be rejected than we do why Wagner should reign supreme among the many great composers; or that because Beethoven's ninth symphony is the greatest of its kind, all that Schubert, Mendelssohn, or Schumann have written since is therefore to be discarded.

If this music were indeed to be the sole music of future ages, we should be unable to repress a sigh of pity for those generations who are to exchange for this new school the immortal melodies of a Mozart or a Schubert. But, no! we think, with an accomplished German critic, that "Wagner will no more succeed in shaking art from her eternal foundations, than Tannhäuser vanquished the holy singer Wolfram." Meanwhile, Wagner has attained a degree of influence during his lifetime which is unparalleled in the records of music. This no one who has witnessed the representation of "Lohengrin," in Berlin, or heard the shouts of applause which hail a Wagner concert at the Gewerbe Haus of Dresden, can deny. More than any other individual

he has succeeded in carrying with him the sympathies, the enthusiasm of the rising generation, and at the present moment his operas bear off the palm of popularity in all the great theatres of Germany. Whether this influence is for good or evil becomes a grave question. It cannot be said that Wagner's music ennobles or purifies; that it sends men back to work with fresh strength and courage, like the sublime inspirations of a Beethoven or a Bach. Purely emotional in character, and acknowledging no law, whether of form or reason, it appeals solely to the passions, and seizing the senses of its listeners, as if by storm, shakes the soul to its utmost, and kindles a wild fire in the veins. This influence, dangerous as it is, may yet serve a high purpose, if the emotions are directed to a worthy end: but too often this is not the case; and it is melancholy to see the composer of "Tannhäuser" and Lohengrin, in Tristan, devoting his powers to the mere glorification of passion, and passion of a very earthly nature. One reason of this entire absence of control, which is so visible in Wagner's music, doubtless arises from his want of moral force, and yet more of a firm, definite faith, however little in these days men are apt to look to such a cause. Strange as it may seem in a dramatist, who owes his brightest conceptions to the most purely Christian subjects, Wagner has long ago declared his opinion that the faith which for centuries has been professed by the civilized world is opposed to art, and has taken up his position in philosophy on the pessimism of Schopenhauer. It is not that he is blind to the beauty of holiness; Tannhäuser-like, he sees and feels it all intensely, but is ever drawn away by irresistible fascination to the wild revelry of the Venusberg. In this respect he differs strangely from the great composers before him, and has missed the perfect glory which crowns the brows of those mighty ones who, like a John Sebastian, or a Beethoven, wrote SOLI DEO GLORIA on their scores, and, like a Mozart and a Schumann, could, in the darkest days, still look upwards and heavenwards.

Of Wagner's rank among the kings of music it is too early as yet to form a just judgment; the strife of tongues, the noise and clamour of angry partisanship, are too busy with his name in this generation, and the verdict must be left to posterity. Meanwhile, we do not hesitate to own in him the greatest creative genius of the day; a genius emphatically of the nineteenth century, with its restlessness, its extravagance, its stormy splendour; with its passionate emotions, and more passionate impatience of control; its glorious capabilities and self-willed errors.

PHYLLIS AND CORYDON.

By Julia Kavanagh.

FIVE years had gone by. The Marquis de la Faille was sitting in his chair, wrapped in a long, quilted morning-gown; a white night-cap came down to his very eyebrows, and the gay Nemorin twirled his thumbs and stared at a fly buzzing against the window-panes in the autumn sun.

"My love," he plaintively said to his wife, who sat near him at her tambour-frame, "do tell that fly not to buzz so."

Madame did not answer, but gave him, and everything around her a moody look. The room was a splendid room, no one could deny it. The gardens below were green and lovely; the fountains were playing gaily, and the dancing fawns and nymphs looked white and merry in the sunshine. But what availed splendid home, green garden, and money, if Madame de la Faille could not enjoy them?

The man she had married was an idiot for life, and she was tied to his sickness: an unwilling nurse. Pleasure was denied her; although his death would give her liberty, it could not give her wealth as well. The Marquis had made no will, and the girl whom her stepmother kept mewed up in a room of the château would inherit all her father's property. Madame de la Faille had made a bad bargain.

The Marchioness was brooding over the whole story, and not heeding poor old Nemorin's querulous request that she would tell the fly not to buzz, when a servant came up with a message. The Count of Saint Brice was below, and asked to see the Marquis. So he had returned from America, where he had been fighting under La Fayette. What was he like? she wondered, and what errand made him seek her husband? Perplexed and curious, she bade the Count be shown up. When he entered the room, in a suit of silver and grey, the lady thought she had never seen a young man of aspect so noble and prepossessing as the son of her betrayed friend. She gazed at him graciously, and seeing the involuntary start of surprise he gave on looking at the Marquis, she heaved a deep, tender sigh, bade him welcome, and said to her husband:

"My love, the Count of Saint Brice has come to see you."

"Let him tell the fly not to buzz so," answered poor Nemorin.

The Marchioness took out her handkerchief and stifled a sob, whilst her visitor gazed with sorrow and surprise on the ruin before him.

"Madame," said the Count, addressing the lady, after a pause, "I perceive your unfortunate husband cannot attend to me: in your hands,

therefore, lies my fate. Through you, I ask Monsieur de la Faille for the hand of his daughter."

On hearing this, all signs of favour vanished from the lady's face, and she coldly answered:

"You are very good, sir: but my husband has no wish to see his daughter married just yet."

"Madame," replied the Count, "this refusal comes not from him, but from you."

Madame de la Faille did not attempt to deny this. Resting her arm across the tambour-frame, she looked moodily at her guest. Then, after a long pause, she said, with a dark smile:

"Pray, when did you last see my step-daughter?"

"Five years ago."

"But you have had some glimpse of her since your return."

"Madame, I arrived last night."

"And you ask her in marriage this morning, though you have not seen her for five years?"

"Madame, I do."

"Well, sir, for the sake of constancy so rare, also because your mother and I were friends once, I shall grant your request; but, like the wicked fairy in the story, I lay down three conditions. Do you agree, first, to marry Mademoiselle de la Faille without a dowry?"

"I do, and gladly."

"Secondly, my beloved husband's health not allowing him to be disturbed in any fashion, and on any account, are you satisfied that the marriage shall take place in the chapel of your castle?"

"Madame, I am satisfied."

"Thirdly, as, on account of my dear husband's illness, I can allow no courtship or wooing, are you content not to see your bride till you meet her on the morning of your wedding-day?"

The young Count gave a start.

"Madame, that is impossible."

"Then, sir, I cannot grant your suit."

He tried to move her, but she was inexorable.

"Madame," he said, warmly, "no change which may have taken place in Mademoiselle de la Faille's appearance can alter my feelings; but in honour I must ascertain what hers are before I marry her."

The lady brooded awhile, and her face was not pleasant to look at when she was thus meditating; then she coldly informed the Count that she would allow him to see her step-daughter once, namely, on the eve of his wedding-day, which she left him free to fix. He tried hard to get better terms, but failed. He yielded, but, indignant at her harshness, he emphatically assured her that if he detected the least signs of reluctance in Mademoiselle de la Faille, he should set her free, no matter at what risk.

"Sir, you are wrong to mistrust your own powers of fascination," was her ironical reply. "Mademoiselle de la Faille will never reject so accomplished a gentleman, and so rare a lover."

On this they parted—the lady triumphant at having prevailed, the Count angry at being conquered; and—why deny it?—rather troubled at terms which were harsh even for an age in which, 'spite its arcadian fancies, the feelings of noble damsels were very rarely consulted.

"Oh, my Phyllis!" he could not help saying to himself, as he rode home. "What has happened to you, my darling? What cruel disease or fatal accident has come to wither your youth?—for beauty you had not. You have shed bitter tears since we parted near this very spot, my Phyllis; but now, please Heaven, your troubles and your sorrows are over, and faithful love is yours for ever." Chivalry is undying, though the age of chivalry has gone by, and chivalry was strong in the young Count's heart. It blended with and tempered all his feelings, and though now put to so severe a test, it was not found wanting. When disquieting thoughts would come, suggesting that Phyllis had had the small-pox, or lost an eye, or undergone some terrible change for the worse, this faithful lover bade them avaunt, and only hurried on the preparations for his marriage. At length the rooms which were being fitted up, prepared at much cost for the young Countess, were ready, the day was fixed, and, on the eve of that eventful day, the Count rode forth to see his Phyllis, and learn his fate. But he did not think of that. All his apprehensions, all his fears, were gone, and a great sense of happiness had come in their stead. The day was a beautiful autumn day, full of a mellow, golden light. As the Count rode through the little wood, near the pool of water-cresses, it seemed to him that the birds warbled love-songs on every bough, and that the soft breeze which passed through the trees was laden with fragrance as delicious as any breeze that ever blew in fairyland. For were not the great thoughts of his boyhood, and the great desire of his youth, going to be fulfilled at last? Was he not going to wed his Phyllis on the morrow?

But when the Count reached the château of La Faille, when he went up the steps and crossed the threshold, there is no denying that his mood was much subdued. All the doubts and fears which he had kept at bay came back to him with cruel power. He dreaded this much-wished-for meeting; especially did he fear lest his countenance should betray a painful surprise, which might wound his Phyllis's tender heart. Devoutly did he pray that however she might be altered, and whatever he might feel, she might read nothing in his eyes save the strong love which had never ceased, and never should cease, he trusted, to burn in his heart for her. That heart throbbed rather fast as he entered the room in which the Marquis and his wife were sitting. A young girl stood in the furthest window, but her face was turned from him, and she neither moved nor looked round on his entrance.

"Well, sir," said the Marquise, in a mocking tone, "you are a punctual man, and I keep my word, of course. My love, this is the Count of Saint Brice, whom you are to marry to-morrow morning. Will you not look at us?"

But instead of obeying, the young girl only buried her face in her hands, and all the poor, puzzled young Count could see was a slender, graceful figure, standing very still in the sunshine which poured in through the tall window.

"Well, sir," resumed the elder lady, in the same mocking tone, "you shall not think or say that I lay any constraint on this coy bride of yours. I leave her with her father and you."

She rose and left the room as she spoke. So long as the train of her silk dress swept the polished floor, so long as her stately figure had not vanished behind the panelled door, the Count did not stir. His heart indeed fluttered wildly in his breast, but his olive cheek, and his bright dark eye, betrayed no emotion. When the room, however, was empty of Madame de la Faille's presence, when he was fairly alone with his love and her poor, old, foolish father, who leaned back in his chair, twirling his thumb, as usual, all self-control left him.

"Phyllis, my Phyllis," he cried, "have we met at last—at last!" and in a second he was by her side, gently, but vainly, endeavouring to remove her hands.

"My Phyllis," he pleaded, "what do you fear? Not that I should love you less: that is impossible; not that I should take advantage of the bondage in which you live: that, too, is impossible. Then look at me, remember our old love; look at me—above all, trust in me."

His voice faltered a little as he said the words, for something terrible, he thought, must be hidden behind those little white hands which still resisted his. At length they yielded, revealing a face so witching, and so beautiful, that, through very wonder, the Count let them drop, and started back. Thus they stood for a moment in the old window, he amazed and doubtful, she blushing like a rose in the warm sunlight.

"Forgive me," he said, recovering, with a deep sigh, "but you are so altered that I cannot yet conquer my amazement. Are you really, can you be, my Phyllis?"

Again his eager gaze scanned her lovely face. The charming profile, and the pretty Grecian lip of his Phyllis, he knew, but white powder hid the bright hair, another soul seemed to look through the blue eyes, the smile of the rosy lips had another meaning. The Count's dainty, delicate lily-of-the-valley had turned into a garden rose, gorgeous and beautiful in the bloom of its eighteen summers. The change was so great that involuntarily he looked for the mole which he had kissed on the day of their parting; it was still there, near her white, dimpled chin.

"Well," she asked, laughing softly at his perplexed looks, "am I Phyllis?"

"Forgive me," he said again; "but how could I expect to find you grown so very, very beautiful?"

She smiled at his praise, but smiled like one who knew that praise her due. That bright, fond smile dazzled him.

"Ah!" he said, with involuntary transport, "how could your step-mother be so cruel? I thought some terrible disease had disfigured you, and I find you so lovely, so lovely!" he repeated, taking her hand, and looking in her witching face.

"And you would have married me all the same?"

"Can you ask it?"

"And loved me all the same?"

"Ah! Phyllis, Phyllis, can you doubt it?"

"I have learned to doubt many things," she replied, with some bitterness.

"Because you have been unhappy, my Phyllis?"

She threw up her arms almost wildly. Unhappy! she had been wretched, utterly wretched since they had parted. And suddenly laying her head on his shoulder, she began to weep. He did his best to comfort her, but the task was not an easy one. "Would he love her—was he sure he would love her—would he never repent having married her?" she asked, with sobs and tears, almost impetuously, and scarcely giving him time to answer. If her distress had not been so great, the Count would have felt provoked at these questions. And yet, strange to say, there was something in his heart, something deep and far away, which almost justified them. On seeing this girl's blooming face, his first feelings had been amazement, as if he were gazing on a stranger; then joy, the natural delight of a young man at finding a handsome bride instead of a plain one, had followed; but his third and last feeling, which deepened as it went on, had been one of dull, heavy disappointment. This Phyllis was very lovely, but then she no longer seemed the same pale little Phyllis whom he had dreamed of for five years, and that one it was whom he had loved, remembered, and come back to wed: forgetting that the child had become a woman. He looked at the beautiful face which lay so near his, and wondered that he felt so cold. With an impulse which he knew later to have been a last despairing effort to save his drowning love, he suddenly stooped to press his lips on that little mole which had once worked such wonders. But either its magic was gone, or the perverse fate which delights in thwarting lovers had resolved to vex the Count, for Phyllis, on seeing his intentions, drew back with a sudden cry, whilst a voice behind them said, angrily:

"Go to your room at once, Mademoiselle. As for you, sir, you may put off that kiss till to-morrow."

Poor Phyllis turned to the nearest door, and vanished in a twinkling; whilst the Count, blushing like a girl, stammered an apology. The

Marquise would hear of none: she was a lady of the strictest decorum, but scolded him so sharply that the poor Marquis began to weep, and the Count was glad to be gone.

And glad surely Philip de Saint Brice ought to have been as he rode home. But, alas for the frailty of the human heart! the golden glory of the day had fled, the songs of birds were as dirges for the fading year, and the breeze no longer blew from fairyland, but came laden with the chill breath of winter. The cruel ordeal was over; Phyllis was far more beautiful than his fondest dreams had ever pictured her to be; she was to be his on the morrow, and the Count felt the most miserable of men. Alas! for the rash vows of youth. Alas! for his rash faith in the truth of his own heart—he no longer loved her. He tried to doubt it, but could not. He had loved a dream all these years. And now that he had reached the fulness of his desires, now that he had stood on the eve of their accomplishment, they were cold and dead.

"This is the last day of my liberty," he thought, as he reached his home, and went up the winding turret staircase. "I must not repine, I must not complain: I have willed it so. The man must abide by the boy's folly. Oh! Phyllis, my little Phyllis, whom I carried up these very stairs eleven years ago, you shall never know what a change these years have wrought in your boyish lover's heart. You shall never be made to feel that what you had then is gone for ever for us both. You have lost the love, and I, the greater bankrupt of the two, my Phyllis, I have lost the power of loving. You are bright and beautiful as the day, but never again can I love you as when I acted Corydon with you; never again can I feel as I felt when I met you, and, taking you in my arms, a poor, pale child, whose cheeks were sunk with grief, and whose eyes were red with weeping, vowed that you, and you alone, should be my wife."

The Count sighed as the word wife recalled him from these fond dreams of the past to the reality of the morrow. He had reached the upper room in which Phyllis and he had spent an hour once. He looked again on a vast sea; he saw a stormy sky. He thought of his blooming bride, who would soon survey that sea and sky with him, standing by his side with her hand clasped in his, her head resting tenderly on his shoulder; and he tried to feel a lover's transports. He tried, but could not; love was dead in his heart, dead and buried, and even beauty could not waken it back to life, or give it a second birth. So the Count de Saint Brice set his teeth and knit his brows.

"Love is dead," he thought, "but honour does not die. Honour must and shall do instead of love."

The sun was going down, throned in purple clouds. The Count watched its setting till it had vanished in the deep, dark sea, above which a ruddy light lingered awhile, but awhile only. The night was moonless and starless. Huge clouds spreading from the south-west

soon covered the whole sky; a stormy wind rose, and moaned along the shore; and the tide came up the beach, filling the dark night with its loud, angry roaring.

"My Phyllis will have but a stormy welcome to-morrow," sighed the Count, as he turned from the window and called for a light. "Well, poor Phyllis, this is a rude home for her: but maybe she will find a way to make it pleasant."

"I shall spend the night here," he said to the old servant, who brought him a lamp. "Let me have some supper, and a bottle of the old Burgundy."

Gertrude stared; there was no bed in the room: nothing, save an old arm-chair; but already the Count's servants had learned that to hear and to obey was their lot; so she withdrew without uttering a word. She soon came back with a cold pasty, and a square bottle of Burgundy, covered with the dust and cobwebs of half a century. The Count looked at it moodily. "That wine was bottled when my grandfather married my grandmother, after she had had the small-pox," he thought, with a sigh; "she offered to set him free, but he was a proud man, and he would marry her all the same, only he never loved her again, and it is said the poor lady did well to die when my father was born. Yours shall never be so hard a lot, my Phyllis, never." And pouring himself out a glass of the rich, red wine, the Count drank to the happiness of his bride, even though his own should be the cost. When his glass was empty he filled it again; when his bottle was drained he called for another; and the pasty, with its crust like brown gold, and its rich, savoury viands, remained untouched. Trouble was with the Count of Saint Brice on the eve of his wedding-day. He was not hungry, and even the generous vintage which had ripened on Burgundian hills could not deaden, or make him forget, his strange desolation. A torpor did, indeed, come over him; he sat by the table, his elbows resting on it, his cheeks in the palms of his hands, his eyes staring moodily at his empty glass; and he knew that he had a grief, though what that grief was he no longer remembered. Thus he remained, till he sank back in his chair and slept a long, dreamless sleep, during which he was conscious of a moaning wind, and of rain beating against the window-panes.

"I told her to wait below, but she would come up. A little forward thing!" said a querulous voice in his ear.

The young Count woke up with a start. Gertrude stood before him with a sour look on her face, and by her side stood a slender girl, whose garments were heavy with rain.

Whilst the Count brooded over his troubles, Gertrude and the other servants were gathered round the kitchen-fire, listening to the wind and rain, and to the moaning of the sea. They speculated on the next day's weather, and on their future mistress's temper. Would the sun

shine a bright welcome on the bride, and would the young Countess be a pretty butterfly like the last, all for pastorals and idylls, and wisely allowing her servants to have their own way; or would she be like her predecessor, the poor lady who had had the small-pox, and whose sharp tongue and shrill voice were still remembered by Gertrude?

"There were no cards and no plays in those days, I can tell you," said Gertrude, nodding severely at two idle damsels who were playing at pigeon-vole in the corner. "It was all spinning and cooking and sewing."

Here the kitchen-door was gently pushed open; a young, pale girl, in a long cloak and little black hat, stepped in, then stood still in the bright, ruddy glow of the kitchen-fire.

"Please," she said, softly, "I want to speak to the Count of Saint Brice."

They all stared at her in amazement, which, with Gertrude, would have turned into downright anger, if she had not remembered that the seamstress from the town was to send one of her workwomen to sew on the lace for the young bride's quilt. So, whilst the two girls in the corner left off their pigeon-vole to look open-mouthed at this girl, so pale, so fair, and with unpowdered hair, which clustered like rings of gold around her graceful neck, Gertrude lit a candle, and with a sharp, "Come this way," showed the stranger upstairs. She took her to the rooms which had once belonged to the Count's mother, and which he had fitted up at heavy expense, and in much haste, for his bride. The silken hangings, splendid mirrors, and rich carpets looked very gorgeous even by the dull, flickering light which Gertrude held.

"Well," she said, standing still by a lofty bed all blue and silvery, "make haste now, and sew on the lace. I shall hold the light for you. But a pretty thing your mistress did to wait till this time of the night to finish the quilt, and the Count getting married to-morrow."

The stranger started back.

"I bring no lace," she said. "I come to speak to the Count on pressing business."

Gertrude stared, then tossed up her head. And what pressing business, she should like to know, could a girl of her years have with the Count on the eve of his wedding-day?

"It is because this is the eve of the Count's wedding-day that I have business with him," composedly replied the stranger. "Make haste; this is a pressing matter, I tell you, and I have a long way before me."

"I knew the girls would all be after my master," muttered Gertrude; but she did not dare to keep back the Count's visitor; so she went up the turret-stairs, followed, 'spite her protests, by the stranger, and thus it was that they both came into the Count's presence. He rose, surprised and doubtful. The young girl turned to Gertrude.

"Leave us," she said, quietly; "my business with your master is private."

"Business, indeed! Pretty business to come stealing up after me, when I told you to wait below!"

"Leave us," interrupted the Count; and this time the order was obeyed, though not without some grumbling about forward demoiselles and the time of the night. The stranger quietly shut the door after Gertrude, then taking up the lamp from the table, and holding it so that its light fell full on her face, she said, calmly:

"Do you know me?"

Oh, heavens! did he know her?—did he know the lost love of his boyhood?—did he know the radiant eyes that had looked up at him so tenderly, when, taking her in his arms, a poor, pale child, he had vowed to love and cherish her as his own dear wife? Five years had given her the charm and the bloom of maiden youth, but there she stood before him, with the light of the lamp shining on her sweet, fair face and on her clustering golden hair, his darling Phyllis still. He could not move, he could not speak, he could scarcely breathe; he could only look at her with silent, delighted eyes.

"You know me," she said, putting down the lamp. "Few words will do. That past which you have set aside was very dear to me. It has brought me here through wind and rain, and at heavy risk, to save you from a great sin. Whilst I have your promise and your mother's wedding-ring, how can you marry another woman? From the one I release you, and the other I restore. Here it is; take it, and give it to your wife to-morrow, if it so please you. You are free now, and there is not a creature breathing, not one, who can say that there is a stain on your honour."

She put the ring on the table and looked at him, sadly and proudly, with dim eyes and a pale, quivering lip. But he did not take up the pledge she thus relinquished: he had neither heard nor heeded her words. The first amazement of his joy had gone by, and, taking her in his arms, he gave way to the rapture of his heart.

"Oh, my love, my dear heart!" he cried, in the language of the day, "have I got you back? Were you lost, and have I got you back, never more to let you go—never, never," said he, kissing the golden hair on which rain-drops still shone. Then he gently put her a little away from him, but only the better to look down into her silent, wondering face.

"Phyllis," he said, eagerly, "to-morrow was to have been the darkest day in my life, but you have come back to make it the brightest. Now that you have entered this house, you must never leave it again, unless as its mistress. It is ready for you, Phyllis, ready and waiting. And listen, that is thunder; look, that is lightning!" he added, as a broad, bright flash filled the room. "Providence sent you, and Providence

will not let you leave me again. How can you doubt? What need you fear? Have we not been pledged years, and has not your father consented to my marriage with his daughter? Oh, my Phyllis, say yes, and let us not run the risk of being again separated."

He ceased, and rousing herself from her long amazement, she untwined his arms from around her, left his side, then suddenly coming back to him, she put her two hands on his shoulders and looked deep into his eyes, with a searching glance.

"Philip," she said, "whom were you going to marry to-morrow? For whom did you get those rooms prepared which I have just seen below?"

"For my Phyllis," he replied, smiling fondly. "I got that cage ready for my darling bird who now stands there, shy and mistrustful, before me, who looks, and will not come in."

So he had been true all the time. So, unless by taking the name of his little pale Phyllis, Manon's brilliant beauty could not have lured him. So he had been true, though so nearly cheated out of his love and liberty by that false Florimel. She did not change her attitude or remove her look. Still standing with her two hands resting lightly on his shoulders, and her eyes raised to his, she said, sadly, but, though she did not mean it, very tenderly:

"Do you know what you are doing? Do you know that if you marry me you take me as I am, with these clothes for my only dowry? Do you know that my poor father no longer knows his child, that I was a prisoner in his house, and that I could not have escaped to-night if my step-mother had not been too much engaged with the nuptials of her niece to-morrow, to watch me? Do you know that if you cast off Manon du Mesnil for me, you make two keen and bitter enemies, and must prepare for long, maybe for life-long, trouble?"

He looked down, smiling, with grave fondness, in her face, and he answered: "Do you know that the first moment I saw you, when we were both children, I loved you? Do you know that when I met you five years ago, when you were still but a child in looks and in years, I felt, 'This girl I will marry, and none other'? Do you know that if I had found you as sickly, as pale, and as unlovely as I left you, instead of being the beautiful and blooming girl now before me, I should have loved you still as I love you now: infinitely, my Phyllis, and for ever, with a love which neither sickness nor sorrow nor death itself shall ever remove from my heart?"

He ceased, unable to say more; and she remained silent, unable to answer. He who spoke believed every word he uttered, and she who listened believed it no less. Do not wonder then that he prevailed, and do not think poor lonely Phyllis indiscreet, if, having come through the rain and storm to save her lover's honour, she remained in the fond, warm shelter of his faithful home and heart, rather than venture

out again in the bleak, wild night, and return to the house which had become her prison.

How the marriage ceremony went off in the chapel of the old feudal castle, there is no record to tell; but it is asserted that the suddenness of the whole affair nearly sent Gertrude into a fit, and that on her recovery she was heard to exclaim: "I knew the girls would all be running after our young master when he came back so handsome, but I never expected anything like *that*."

At ten of the morning the Count was to fetch his bride, but by eight he stood at the gates of the château—two hours' impatience is no doubt natural in a bridegroom—and asked to see its mistress. Madame de la Faille had quarrelled that very morning with her waiting-maid, who seized this opportunity for a sly bit of revenge. So she took the Count upstairs at once, and perfidiously throwing a door open, she showed him in, without warning, to the dressing-room where her mistress, with brush in hand, was endeavouring to put a mole on the cheek of the beautiful Manon. The two ladies started back apart on seeing him, and Madame de la Faille, running up to the Count, put her two hands on his shoulders and tried to push him out, saying, playfully, "Not yet, sir, not yet: you come too soon;" but the Count did not stir, and looking sorrowfully at the young lady, who had turned her blushing face away, he said, gravely:

"I do not come too early for my purpose, Madame, which is to tell you that I was married to your step-daughter, Mademoiselle de la Faille, last night."

The Marquise remained thunder-struck, but the young lady uttered a faint cry, and sank down on a chair, like one overcome with shame and grief. The Marquise set her teeth and clenched her hands, giving her blue taffetas morning-wrapper a great dab of black paint from the brush which she still held.

"Well, sir," she said, "is that what your boasted honour and constancy come to? Was it all meant to insult my daughter; or have you really been deceived by some artful impostor; and do you come here, unconscious of the cheat that has been practised upon you?"

"Attempted," corrected the Count, and looking sadly at Manon, who was weeping, he said, gently: "Allow me to regret that gifts so precious and so rare as youth and perfect beauty should be thus wasted."

Mademoiselle du Mesnil wept more than ever, but her aunt, seizing the Count by the arm, said, imperiously: "Come to my husband, sir; come and account for this insult to his daughter."

"Madame," said the Count, coldly, "not to your husband only, but to the whole world, will I answer for what I have done."

"Come to my husband, sir," repeated the lady, exasperated at his

coolness. She pushed a door open, and they stood together in a stately bedroom. It was darkened, yet the Count could see the poor Marquis sitting in his bed, propped up by pillows, with the flush from the crimson curtains on his pallid face.

"Marquis!" said the enraged lady, "this is the Count of Saint Brice, the son of the foolish little Countess who used to act so badly, you know. Well, then, this is her son, Marquis, who has been stealing your daughter from you, do you hear? He has lured her to his house, and disgraced you and her. Do you hear, I say, do you hear?"

She took his arm and shook it, in the violence of her wrath. Her fury woke the palsied man back to life.

"Is it fire?" he gasped, "is it for murder?" He tried to rise, but could not, and, with a wild look of horror and a convulsive groan, he sank back—dead!

The Marquise screamed, the Count called for help; but when help came it availed not. The shock had proved mortal to the poor, enfeebled body.

"You have killed him!" cried the Marquise, when she realized that she was a widow. "Leave the house, sir."

"Madame," gravely replied the Count, "this house belongs now to my dear wife, the Marquis's daughter, and I shall stay here to guard her rights till she can come herself and make them good."

The Marquise, on hearing this, raved like one demented. Decency and respect for that poor dead man, who lay cold and white beneath his crimson daïs, had no power to restrain her. The Count was shocked, and, to avoid the unseemly quarrel, he left the room. But he still remained in the château, whence he despatched a messenger with a letter for his Phyllis, whom he bade come to him at once. We cannot quarrel with the dead: all our wrath spends itself in vain upon them: they lie beyond our reach, in their solemn silence. The Marquise grew hushed at once, when the Count left her; she, too, soon forsook her dead husband, and went to seek her niece. The servants heard the two ladies talking loud and angrily for some time, then they grew suddenly silent, and a great hush, the hush of death, fell over the whole of the stately mansion.

The Count sat alone in the large salon, feeling the cloud which death had cast over his new-born happiness, and waiting for his Phyllis. But time passed; it was noon now, and Phyllis came not. The Count paced the salon up and down, in a fever of unrest, at the bottom of which lurked secret fears—those shadows which darken our sunniest hours, and throw their gloom upon the brightness of our lives. At length, when another hour had gone by, he could bear the suspense no longer. He went down to the stable, took out his horse himself, and rode off, without saying a word to anyone.

The Count remained two hours away; when he came galloping back

to the gates of the château, he was pale as death, and his panting horse was covered with foam.

"My wife!—where is my wife?" he cried. "Phyllis, Phyllis!" But no Phyllis answered him; not a soul appeared at his call. He alighted, he hastened up the broad staircase, he went through the rooms, and he saw no one. The whole of that great house was deserted. Death had entered it, he had set up his grim throne there, and now reigned alone.

Everyone had fled: the Marquise with the plate and the family jewels; the upper servants with such plunder as they could lay their hands on. The dead-chamber alone had not been ransacked; there the Marquis slept his last sleep, with his old dog, who had crept up to him and was now lying at his feet. Like one distracted, the Count went through the whole house, seeking his Phyllis. Once his heart throbbed with joy as he heard a step, but when he pushed open a door, he only saw an old woman, who shook her head at all his questions, and said, in a quavering voice: "Deaf, sir, deaf: stone deaf," and, putting a slip of paper in his hand, went away muttering.

Mechanically the Count looked at the paper, and read: "Because for half an hour you have loved me with the only true love that ever has been, or ever will be, felt for the unhappy Manon, I will serve you. Watch over your love, and beware of *Thetis*."

"Beware of *Thetis!*" thought the amazed Count. Then suddenly he uttered a cry, "Oh Heaven!" The *Thetis* was one of the King's ships in the harbour. It might be ordered for Pondichéry; it might be going away the next day, that very night—it might be gone by this. The Count was a brave man, but no coward's cheek ever grew whiter with fear than his, as he stood with the fatal paper in his hand. There are evils too strong for the strongest man, and this was one. The Count knew that he could avenge his wife—he did not know if he could save her. He could hunt her ravishers to the very confines of the earth, and wring their heart's blood from them; he could make them rot in a prison, and rue, by bitterness to which that of death is naught, that they had ever laid a profane finger on the treasure of his love; but could their shame, could their dishonour, could their years of darkness and sorrow, atone to him for his loss? Could their chastisement give back to her—his young wife of eighteen, whom he had pressed to his heart so fondly on their first parting—could they give her back the happiness which had but just dawned over her sad youth?

Phyllis had left Saint Brice four hours: that he knew, that and no more. What if she had been waylaid, kidnapped, and been already taken on board the *Thetis?* Drops of fear and anguish gathered on his forehead at the thought, and for a moment he stood motionless and powerless with that fatal warning in his hand, the blood flowing feebly and coldly round his heart.

That portion of his Majesty's ships which lay in the neighbouring harbour was then under the rule of the Chevalier de Blangy, an easy old sailor, who listened to every complaint, gave everyone a fair hearing, and thought himself a martyr to duty. "I am a victim," he often said, "a perfect victim." To walk up and down the port, smoking in the sun, was one of the few pleasures this victim enjoyed, and whilst he was thus engaged it was well known that he would heed no complaint, and receive no petitions. Accordingly, when a young man with a blanched face and white lips suddenly stepped before him this afternoon and barred his way, the Chevalier pettishly put his fingers in his ears, and said, angrily: "Not now, sir; in an hour's time I will hear all you have to say, but not now." But the young man, seizing both the Chevalier's arms, compelled his fingers to leave his ears, and with a stern voice and a sterner look, he said:

"I am the Count of Saint Brice. I was married last night to Mademoiselle de la Faille, and this morning my wife was carried off by two Gardes du Pavillon, and forcibly conveyed on board the *Thetis*, where she is now. I ask to search the ship, and, living or dead, to get my wife back."

The poor Chevalier's pipe fell from his lips, and was broken on the flags as he heard this. A Countess, not a tradesman's wife or daughter, had been abducted by those terrible youths!

"Sir," he said, looking bewildered, "this cannot be. It is impossible."

The Count turned to Gertrude, who stood behind him.

"This woman has been our servant fifty years. With her own eyes she saw my wife carried away on her way to me; with her own ears she heard her shrieks for help. I ask to search the *Thetis*, and get her back."

"But the lady may not be on board the *Thetis*," cried the Chevalier, more and more distressed.

The Count turned to a sailor, and bringing him forward, he said: "This man was waiting for his sweetheart this morning, outside the harbour, when he saw two men, and a woman who was weeping bitterly, enter a boat. That woman was my wife. That boat made for the *Thetis*. I ask to search the *Thetis*, and so get my wife back."

"Sir, that is impossible," desperately said the Chevalier.

"Impossible," cried the Count, whose eyes turned like dark fire. "You tell me it is impossible for me to get my wife back from that den."

"Yes, sir, I do," replied the Chevalier, pointing to the sea. "There is the *Thetis*, overtake her if you can."

The Count looked towards the far horizon. The sun was setting, the sea was flooded with fire, the sky was one broad sheet of flame, and in that burning glow he saw a black speck. He knew that this

speck, which vanished as he looked, was bearing his Phyllis away, that he was powerless to follow, that he might wait years for revenge, that life was wrecked, and that love was lost. Despair conquered him. He clenched his hands, he shook his fist at that pitiless sea, that had helped his ruin, and, with a cry of the sharpest anguish, with a groan of unutterable agony, he sank down senseless on the earth.

The Chevalier was well-nigh distracted. A Countess had been carried off, and her husband, a brave young gentleman, was lying all but dead at his feet. "And what could he do? Why, these awful young men would carry off the Queen of France soon, and everyone came and worried him, and what could he do?"

In the meanwhile Gertrude had her young master removed to the nearest house, and that careless Nemesis who so often crosses our fate, ordained that the husband of Phyllis should be taken to that old mansion on the port where she had once dwelt, and where, since the death of her mother, and the disappearance of her two sisters, the erring but lovely Manon had lived alone. The poor gentleman was kindly received, and conveyed to the room and laid in the bed with the curtains of faded blue lampas, which Manon had once shared with Phyllis. Without delay the best physician in the town was called in, and when the Count woke, in a terrible fever, from his dead-like swoon, a kind nurse shared with Gertrude the task of tending him day and night.

To some, death comes, after hopeless calamity, a merciful deliverer; to others, the delirium of illness brings temporary forgetfulness; but the husband of Phyllis was not so formed. From the first the doctor said he would not die, and though when he woke to life his senses were gone, there remained enough of memory to be his torment. Through all the ravings of fever he remembered that he had lost his Phyllis, and how he had lost her. He went through the search for her over and over again. He followed her from Saint Brice to the château; he tracked her to the city; when he reached it, the *Thetis* was gone. For ever and ever that *Thetis* was sailing away, robbing him of every happiness and every delight. Fated ship, that had taken all things with it—the tender past, the blissful present, the delightful future! "Thetis! Thetis! how had I wronged you?" he raved, in his delirium, confounding the goddess of dead Olympus with his living enemies. "Give me back my Phyllis." In vain the poor young madman received the tenderest nursing, this silver-footed Thetis killed him by inches. He took poor old Gertrude for her, and kissed her brown hands in pathetic entreaty, with a "Give me back my Phyllis," that was both piteous and despairing. His other nurse, that girl with the blue eyes and the golden hair, he knew but too well.

"Do not come near me," he would say, bending his wrathful eyes upon her; "I know you, and I would rather have Thetis than you. Go away, I say. Go away."

On hearing this harsh sentence the beautiful face would turn away weeping, and after awhile come back, to be again driven away and repulsed sternly. Yet one night the sick man relented.

"I know you are not my Phyllis," he said, "though you are so like her; but cheat me, cheat me—say you are Phyllis."

"I am Phyllis," she replied, softly.

"Then why are you not on board the *Thetis?*"

"Because I was brought and hidden here till the *Thetis* sailed."

"And who went away with the *Thetis?*"

"Manon; she took my place. She did it for your sake, and I am your Phyllis. Look."

She bent her face near his; he raised his head eagerly to kiss her, then he pushed her away sternly.

"Where is the mole on your cheek?" he asked—"that mole which nearly caught me once! You forget putting it on to-day, my lady. Put it on when you want to cheat me, put it on."

She wept, but he only laughed at her tears. And so it was ever: he either loathed her, and drove her from him, or, when he tolerated her presence, he upbraided her with not cheating him out of his despair.

At length the fever was conquered, delirium left him, and the Count woke back to life, and though not at once, to the bitter memory of his sorrow. His first consciousness was of a room, that could belong neither to Saint Brice nor to the château of La Faille. It was too small for the one, and too dingy for the other. Besides, was not that shipping, which he saw through the open window; were not those tall masts, rising, and white flags fluttering, against the blue sky? As the Count looked thus, the past came back to him in all its agony. He gazed around him, as if to escape from it, and the very image he wanted to fly from, appeared at the foot of his bed, in all its seductive beauty. He uttered a sharp cry, for she stood there before him, weeping and smiling as she wept. She stood there, fair and tender, his wife, his own Phyllis with the mole on her cheek.

"Phyllis, my Phyllis, where have you been all this time?" he asked, when he could speak.

"Here with you," she answered, gently. "Here all the time with you."

He looked round, as if for some other face. Phyllis shook her head, and said, sadly:

"Manon is gone; I was brought here. She took my place, and went on board the *Thetis* in my stead. One of the Gardes du Pavillon, who liked her, helped her to cheat the rest. She did it for your sake, and—and she bade me tell you that you were to think of Manon now and then."

"Think of her!" said the Count, much moved. "Ah, surely. How

can I but think of one without whom there would have been no more happiness for me?"

And so these two were happy from that time forth, and the arcadia of their youth dwelt with them for evermore. But if the beautiful Manon was not forgotten by Phyllis and Corydon, she was seen no more by them. A rumour once reached them, in their blissful dream of love, that she had married an old sea captain; but whether it was true or false they never knew. Even in fairy tales, idylls, and romances, some one must go to the wall, some sad Manon must walk in the shade, whilst happy Phyllis and Corydon rejoice in the sun.

EROS.

SWEET Love, be thou my theme,
And I will hymn thy praises;
Fair Love, come let me dream
Of thee in all thy phases.
Sweet did I say? And yet thou canst be bitter;
If born of earth, her tears will spoil thy flavour;
And fair? To call thee foul would sure be fitter,
Since of her mire too often thou dost savour.
But whether foul or fair,
Reality or cheat,
A refuge or a snare,
With joy or woe replete,
What mortal does not gladly bear
Thy bitter for thy sweet!

Immortalised in song,
Renowned in ancient fable;
And oftentimes so strong,
And oftentimes unstable.
Hast thou no charm to hold what thou dost cherish?
Hast thou no spell to guard thy dearest treasure?
Idols of thine, alas! too quickly perish,
And beggared love is left to weep at leisure.
But whether in despair,
With joy or woe replete,
And whether foul or fair,
Reality or cheat,
What mortal does not gladly bear
Thy bitter for thy sweet!

S. E. G.

BY CHANCE.

A COAT and a despatch-box were on the seat in the corner; a silk umbrella reposed in the network above. Miss Marlowe had not seen them, or she would never have hurried Lisa into that particular compartment. Lisa's brown eyes had caught sight instantly of arrangements so strongly suggestive of a fellow-traveller, but she mischievously held her tongue.

"At last!" said Miss Marlowe, with a sigh of relief, as she settled herself in her place. "One never feels safe until one is fairly in a carriage. All to ourselves, too! Very fortunate, for there are so many Frenchmen about." And Miss Marlowe shuddered as though she had said so many "wolves."

"There generally are a great many about in France, are there not?" said Lisa; adding, demurely: "They are not bad-looking, I think."

"My dear! you have no business to know anything about their looks. Now, let me see, before we start:—four parcels and the red bag—why, Lisa, Lisa, where is the red bag?"

"There is something very like it on the platform higher up, aunt, near where we were standing," said the young girl, still demurely, although her eyes were dancing with suppressed amusement.

Miss Marlowe thrust herself half out of window; she beckoned to a porter; called to him in bad French, then in English, but no one heeded her. At the further end of the long train the carriage-doors were already being slammed in succession; but measuring with a glance the length of the train, and mentally calculating her chances, she left the carriage and hastened along the platform, urged probably to so rash a step by beholding the red bag caught up in the arms of a porter and carried off in a wrong direction. The Frenchman in the next compartment shrugged his shoulders—"Une Anglaise," he said to his companion. The guard drew near to the carriage in which Lisa sat; there drew near also the owner of the brown travelling-coat; he sprang in, only just in time; the door was slammed after him. Far down the platform Miss Marlowe struggled with a porter, for the train began to move: her only chance to secure a seat at all was in submitting to be ignominiously tumbled, red bag and all, into the nearest carriage. The whistle sounded, and they were off.

The poor lady glared round upon her fellow-travellers. It was some consolation that they were English.

"But, my niece!" she cried—"a young girl entrusted to my care. I positively *must* rejoin her!"

She held the red bag, the cause of this misadventure, fiercely in her grasp, and looking angrily round, almost as though thinking that her companions were in some way to blame. But by degrees they consoled her, pointing out that there would be no difficulty in her joining her niece as soon as they reached the next station; and by degrees she consoled *herself* by the reflection that matters might have been worse. "At least, Lisa was alone." And laying this flattering unction to her soul, she devoted her mind to the study of a continental Bradshaw and a calculation of the time that must elapse before the first stoppage.

Lisa was seventeen. She had left school only a week before, and was travelling under her aunt's care to join her family in Paris en route for Rome. She had soft brown eyes, dark hair, a sweet rosebud of a mouth, and a dimple in her chin. There was something slightly wrong about her nose: it was neither Grecian nor Roman; perhaps retroussé: but, for all that, it was a lovely face. For the rest, her figure was perfect and her gloves were sixes.

At the hasty entrance of the stranger, she smiled, thinking, undutifully, "What a fuss auntie will be in!" For the good lady had a horror of men anywhere, but especially in a railway carriage; where, moreover, *one* man frightened her more than two.

There seemed nothing very alarming about this young man, who leaned from the window much amused at the scene upon the platform, which, by the position he had taken up, was hidden from Lisa. But when the train began to move, and Miss Marlowe had not appeared, the colour came into the girl's face, tears welled up into the brown eyes, and moving towards the window, she addressed to her companion a request quite impossible to be complied with.

"Oh, please, let me out!"

A pair of frank blue eyes met hers, and the answer was given in English.

"I'm afraid I can't do that, but the train will stop in less than an hour."

"Oh dear!" said poor Lisa, "what *will* my aunt do? I am all alone ——" She broke down, nearly crying outright.

Very courteously and gently the young Englishman strove to reassure her, telling her that the lady was in the train—"red bag and all," he added, smiling; and would be sure to rejoin her at the first station. "I saw her put into a carriage. You may really make yourself easy; in an hour she will be beside you again. Will you not try and be philosophical, and enjoy this beautiful afternoon?"

So Lisa studied philosophy, and, on the whole, found it very pleasant. Raymond Gore was going to Rome, also, it appeared.

"My mother is there," he told her; "we are sure to become acquainted."

"I think we are acquainted now," said Lisa, smiling. Her feet were

on his despatch-box, and, altogether, she was very comfortable and not at all shy by this time.

"You are too unsophisticated! I am sure your aunt will tell you that this is not an acquaintance—we have not been introduced, you know. In Rome it will be all right."

They talked of Italy. Raymond had travelled a great deal, and told her much that was well worth hearing. But all the time while he conversed politely with the young lady whom fate had thrown in his way, he was carrying on a monologue within himself of a different sort, something in this style:

"By Jove! what a piece of luck! Such eyes the child has! I wonder if she has any idea what a little angel she is! The old lady deserves a gold medal. Why can't chaperons do this kind of thing oftener?" &c. &c.

He by no means blessed the train when it stopped at last, although he was politic enough to do his best to ingratiate himself with Miss Marlowe, and made himself as useful as he dared during the rest of the journey to Paris. Here, by rights, their paths should have separated, for the ladies were to travel slowly, and did not expect to reach Rome for three weeks; he, on the contrary, was going there direct to join his mother. Leaning back in the corner of the carriage, after Miss Marlowe had broken up that pleasant tête-à-tête, he had taken out the letter which had summoned him to Italy, glancing ever and anon, as he re-read it, at the sweet face opposite, and speculating upon the chance meeting, which certainly made his mother's words of wisdom fall somewhat coldly on his heart. Mrs. Gore wrote:

"I am charmed, my dear Ray, that you at last see the force of my remarks. It is quite time you found a wife, and, without advocating for you a *merely* worldly marriage, I would suggest that women are as good with money as without, and that since your heart is, you tell me, free, it would be only reasonable to *see* Ada—you have not met now for six years—before rejecting all thoughts of an alliance which the whole family desire. She is a most amiable girl, but I warn you that others beside ourselves number her twenty thousand pounds amongst her chief charms. Come at once, my dear boy. Horace Dyke, who has not a penny, has had the impudence to follow us from Florence, and what with rides in the Campagna, visiting the churches and galleries —to say nothing of the Coliseum by moonlight, which, with a girl like Ada, is *most dangerous*—I will not answer for the consequences if you do not very shortly appear upon the scene."

There was much more to the same purpose. Ray's lip curled as he read, mentally contrasting the idea he had conceived of his fashionable cousin, her red hair en chignon, and her scrupulous propriety of demeanour, with Lisa's tangled curls and naïve, child-like manner. Had an accident made a fool of him? he asked himself. Was this

"love at first sight"? But for that hour's tête-à-tête, although no man with eyes in his head could have helped admiring the child, Ray would have done no more—but *now?* At all events, he changed his plans. At the Hôtel du Louvre he scraped acquaintance with the rest of the party, improved it vastly during the long hours to Lyons three days later, and ended by making himself so indispensable in their arrangements, that it was a matter of very little difficulty to carry out his secret intention of travelling with them to Rome; stopping where they stopped, acting everywhere as their cicerone, almost as their courier.

But Lisa, meantime, had, as her sisters loved to express it, found her level—a level, in their estimation, far below their own. It had never been the family fashion to include her in schemes of pleasure: only that the grandmother, with whom she usually spent her holidays, had chosen, very inconveniently, to die that autumn, Lisa would have been in Nottinghamshire at this moment. As it was, they never ceased to remember, and to make her remember, that she was not "out." In Rome she was to have masters and continue her education; on the journey they made her useful. She it was who packed and unpacked the carpet-bags; gave orders, in her pretty, schoolgirl French, to waiters and chamber-maids; when the day was hot, stifled herself in the most uncomfortable corner of the carriage, while Cora or Margaret enjoyed the view; or, when the weather was disagreeable, was perched outside while they took care of their complexions within. For all that, she was very happy. It might not be considered by everyone the height of enjoyment and a cause of perfect satisfaction to find oneself on the box-seat of a carriage, a driving rain pelting in one's face 'spite of the leathern hood; but it was so to her. Was not Ray beside her? On they went out of Lyons, where, in the road, the weak mud, bullied by the rain, flew round the wheels despairingly, and the brother mud of which the hovels were built stood up brown and hardened; on past peasant women with scarlet umbrellas, past little boys with no shoes or stockings, past girls driving obstinate, high-backed pigs, but never past the drifting rain, never past the flying, spattering, spiteful mud, which leaped up in not always vain endeavours to reach them. Now and then, Ray left his seat in answer to some call from within; for Lisa's father, unused to travelling, was only too glad to avail himself of the young fellow's superior wisdom; nor were the young ladies at all shy of claiming his assistance in any little difficulty that arose.

"We treat you like a courier, I am afraid," said Lisa, once, as he scrambled up beside her.

He shrugged his shoulders. "If I am courier, you are lady's-maid, and here we are together outside in the rain while our masters are inside—just as servants should be. And do you know, Miss Lisa, I think the servants have the best of it. Do you see the white mist rolling up the mountain-side? And there where the mists of earth and

the clouds of heaven mingle and wrap the hill-top in a fleecy mantle? The others see nothing like that."

As the hours wore on, and Lisa grew tired and silent, twilight gathered slowly, and Ray felt as if in a dream. Almost, it seemed to him, as the horses went steadily on before him, the rain drifted in his face, and the wheels and the flying mud maintained their quarrel in the road, that the horses were death's horses, the driver old Time himself, and he the traveller through Life, looking out on every side; now forward, to speculate upon that which is to come; now back, to meditate upon the past; but seldom to the present, vanishing so quickly, here hardly a moment; scarcely expected in the future before it is beside us, scarcely recognised before it melts already into the past. Fate was leading him to Ada Dalrymple, her chignon, her amiability, and her twenty thousand pounds. Was it not better here, in the rain, under the leathern hood beside Lisa?

They entered Italy by Mount Cenis. Raymond Gore and Lisa walked nearly the whole way up the mountain—I write of fifteen years ago—to enjoy the view. Margaret, who was romantic, joined them when near the summit. But, behold! a fog so thick they could hardly see a yard before them! The whole party were glad to gain the shelter of the carriage, which rattled down the other side through the mist. Gradually, as they descended amongst the tall chestnut-trees, whose tops seemed to rise out of the fog to meet the travellers dropping down upon them from above, they passed picturesque herds of cattle upon the road, for it was St. Michael's Day, when the sheep and cows annually exchange the mountain pastures for those of the valleys below. At Susa, the sun was shining: the fog had been left on the mountain-top.

Lisa exclaimed with childish delight at the sights from the hotel window at Turin—the Carmelite friars, the wheelbarrows piled with luscious grapes, melons, figs bursting with ripeness, which dark-eyed Italian boys were driving.

"It is Miss Edgeworth's 'little merchants' come to life!" she said. But she was not left to admire the little merchants long; there were her sisters' travelling-bags to unpack, and all her duties as lady's-maid to attend to. The others drove round the town.

"My dear, it is like the opera!" exclaimed Miss Marlowe, enthusiastically, when the handsome Italian driver, who wore a moustache, and had very fine eyes, turned round to point out the palace.

"Ecco il palazzo del re!" he said, in recitative, and they none of them understood him, seeing that their little interpreter was absent, and Ray walking by himself. Miss Marlowe shook her head over the young man's breakfast the next morning. He was found in the market-place, where he had hired a chair, and, seated opposite a fruit-stall, was breakfasting on ripe figs.

It would take too long to follow step by step the slow vetturino journey to Florence; to tell how they loitered amongst the marble palaces in the dream-like streets of Genoa; how they drove by the shores of the "tideless sea," where orange and fig trees dip down to the blue water; how they lingered over boating excursions at Spezzia; or, finally, how they spent ten days at Florence itself, where Ray showed Lisa the Duomo by moonlight, and took that opportunity of telling her how much he should look forward to meeting his little friend in Rome. From the balcony of their hotel on the Lung' Arno they watched the eclipse of the moon, which everyone had been looking forward to when they left England, and which was a wondrous sight in the clear depths of an Italian sky.

The next morning Ray's happiness suffered an eclipse. His dream was over. He received a letter from his mother; she was ill and alone, and urged him to join her instantly. The rest of the party had still a fortnight to spend in Florence, so he left them, promising himself that the same unfettered intercourse now broken off would only be renewed at the same point later. But, ah! when does that happen?

They missed him very much. The visits to the Uffizi and the Pitti were not half so interesting as when he was their guide. Sightseeing was gone through as a duty—only Miss Marlowe plodded on with her "Murray," and felt no difference; but Cora and Margaret took to going about in hideous mushroom hats, were snappish to each other, and snubbed their father. It had been hot weather when they came; the ladies drove of evenings on the Lung' Arno, bareheaded and with fans in their hands; but before they left, the cold wind from the mountains was blowing. Indeed, the day on which they drove out of Florence, Miss Marlowe's little speech suggested forcibly that one can feel chilly even in Italy.

"How cold the Venus must be, poor thing!" she remarked, shivering as she spoke.

Lisa looked forward to Rome for its own sake, apart from any expectation of meeting Ray there. The girl was in a flush of excitement as they drew near and the first sight of the dome of St. Peter's met her eyes. When they passed through the Porta del Popolo she was outside the carriage, and laden, as usual, with cloaks, travelling-bags, and various other impedimenta with which her sisters did not find it convenient to encumber themselves. An open carriage was coming out; in it a lady leant back gracefully, watching, with an amused expression, the animated gestures of a young man opposite, who appeared to be describing something to the younger lady, also leaning gracefully back in her corner.

The young man was Raymond Gore; the young lady had red hair. Neither of them saw Lisa.

Miss Marlowe had friends in Rome to whom she had written to secure

rooms for her brother and his daughters. The next day saw them established for the winter; masters were engaged for Lisa, and before they had been in Rome a week, her day was fully mapped out, her hours all arranged; she had about as much chance of meeting Raymond as she would have had with her grandmother in Nottinghamshire.

At first the girl did not realise this. When she walked on the Pincian at unfashionable hours, the brown eyes looked out eagerly for her fellow-traveller. Every ring at the door-bell made her heart beat, but she was never summoned to the drawing-room; indeed, was very quickly hurried out of it, when she did happen to be there, if callers were expected. She heard her sisters speak disdainfully of *that* Mrs. Gore, who, there was some reason to suppose, had refused to be introduced to them, and now and then they alluded to having met Raymond in society.

Once he called. Lisa knew he was in the house, but her Italian master was with her. She half hoped Ray would wait till she appeared, but when she was free to join her sisters, she found them alone. Margaret was writing notes, Cora practising a song, of which the refrain, "dam'mi quel fior," had once occasioned (owing probably to Cora's peculiar pronunciation) the anxious inquiry from her aunt, "My dear, are you sure you are not swearing?"

"Lisa, child," said Cora, breaking off abruptly in her musicial performance, "would you just see to my blue silk? We are going to this Mrs. Gore's ball, after all. I suppose he insisted."

So poor little Cinderella decked out her sisters, but no fairy godmother came to the rescue. Instead of a pumpkin coach and glass slippers, Lisa crept away to bed, wondering why she should feel disappointed, when, of course, she had no reason to expect to lead in Rome a gayer life than she had hitherto led in England.

The history of the invitation had been this:—Finding his mother bent upon a marriage between himself and his cousin, and knowing that Lisa had no wealth to be put into competition with Ada's fortune, he was absolutely afraid to allude to his new acquaintances, and thought he would wait to do so until they arrived in Rome and he could introduce them personally. Meantime, Ada *was* "very amiable," and certainly it was amusing to excite Horace Dyke's jealousy. By-and-by, at a formal evening party at an old Italian house, where the men all herded together, the young ladies congregated as far away from them as they could get, and stately matrons, surrounding a cardinal or two, exchanged civilities and scandal, in the midst, Ray caught sight of Margaret's pale blue eyes and artificial smile. His heart leaped within him; Ada's charms faded in his sight as little Lisa's childlike beauty rose up before him mentally.

"I wish you would know those people, mother," he said, later in the evening, after greeting poor Margaret with a warmth she might well

have been forgiven for mistaking. "I travelled with them to Florence. Three daughters, a father, and an aunt—they were very civil."

Mrs. Gore raised her eyebrows.

"I can't say much for your taste, Ray. No, thanks; don't trouble yourself to present me."

Ray bit his lip, but felt determined to carry his point. A day or two after, as he and his mother drove down the Corso, they passed Miss Marlowe and Lisa, who, however, did not see them.

"What an exquisite face!" exclaimed Mrs. Gore.

Ray was triumphant.

"My little friend—the third daughter," he said. "Ah, mother, you will have nothing half so lovely at your ball!"

Mrs. Gore looked for an instant searchingly in her son's face, and, being a wise woman, said nothing; but in that instant her plans were laid. The next day she called at the lodgings in the Via Croce, soon discovered that, as she had expected, Lisa's sisters had no inclination to be thrown into the shade, said a few words as to the desirability of keeping young girls in the background, especially abroad, and a few hours later made Ray himself, unwittingly, the bearer of an invitation to her ball for—Cora and Margaret, under the chaperonage of their aunt!

The ball was a success to everyone but Raymond—certainly a success to Horace Dyke, who proposed that evening to Ada Dalrymple's twenty thousand pounds, and was accepted.

"Does not your little sister go to balls?" asked Ray of Cora, with whom he was dancing.

"Dear me, no!" replied the young lady. "Why, she is not 'out,'" which was exactly what Ray was complaining of.

He fully intended after this to break the meshes which fate seemed to have woven round him, and insist upon seeing Lisa; but his mother was now on her guard, and obstacles were most cleverly contrived to prevent his finding his way to the Via Croce. Mrs. Gore had made inquiries. "No money, no connection, absolutely *nothing* but a glorious pair of eyes, my dear," she told Ada, as they gossiped together; and though that young person had not herself appreciated his merits, she had cousinly affection enough to combine her efforts heartily with those of her aunt in the endeavour to keep him "out of harm's way."

Picnics to Egeria's fountain, excursions to Albano, Tivoli, Frascati, days of hunting in the Campagna, nights of dancing amongst the English visitors—dancing, by the way, upon brick floors covered with hay; over that a carpet; and over that again a "stretcher," which lugubrious title was given to tightly-stretched linen whose polished surface alone made dancing possible under the circumstances. They did their utmost to monopolize the young man.

And Lisa walked every morning on the Pincian Hill, learnt her

French and Italian, read her history, and thought that she should never see him again. And probably they never would have met again had not "chance" befriended them.

They took her to the Corso in Carnival week; they could hardly help doing that. Miss Marlowe's friends had a balcony, and many a bonbon was thrown to the beautiful English girl whose merry laughter rang out and whose eyes danced with such innocent amusement at the novel scene. At last there came a moment when the whole motley throng vanished for Lisa, and she saw only one face—the face of Ray.

Smiling, full of excitement, he stood up in his mother's carriage as it passed, took off his hat and tossed up a bouquet, which, falling at Lisa's feet, was gracefully raised from the ground by Margaret, who appropriated it at once!

"He has not forgotten me," thought little Lisa. "If I were 'out,' perhaps he would throw *me* flowers also—but he certainly looked at me. I think I shall see him again now."

But the next time he called she really was not in the house, but walking with Miss Marlowe, scanning every face she met, pushing aside the heavy leathern curtain before the entrance to St. Peter's, with a hope in her heart that her friend might be within; feeling it a little hard that *all* the pleasure and gaiety of life should be for Cora and Margaret, when so small a share of it would content her. Two young Italians of the guardia nobile stood aside to allow her and her aunt to pass.

"An English miss," remarked one; "and beautiful."

"Cosa strana! those meeses," said his companion. "Figure to yourself—they eat in our churches! Ma è vero—after a ceremony, CHICKEN BONES have been found amongst their seats!"

"Bah! they are heretics. Hungry, perhaps, but beautiful."

And thus the winter wore away, one long disappointment to Lisa. The last day in Rome dawned. They were to go to Naples for a fortnight, then home to England. It so happened that the evening before they left was that fixed upon for the illumination of the Coliseum, a piece of barbarism practised by our dear countrymen in Rome. For a wonder, Lisa went. All Rome was there, the vast arena crowded. The aim of our party was by dint of much pushing and patience to reach the iron cross in the centre. The night was dark; Miss Marlowe stumbled over the scattered stones; Lisa held on, according to orders, by her aunt's shawl. The poor child felt out of spirits; she had expected so much from this stay in Rome, and it was over now! She had dwelt, with such faith in its fulfilment, on Ray's prophecy that they should often meet and spend a happy winter together. I don't think her thoughts went any further—she did not understand her own pain. The magic word had not been spoken which would have kindled her feelings into love; but if ever love was ready in a young heart to wake at first touch of the enchanter's wand, he was ready in Lisa's.

"Hold tight, my dear!" cried Miss Marlowe, in desperation, as a sudden impulse from behind sent her briskly forward; but at the instant a heavy foot came down on Lisa's dress, and an ominous sound of tearing and giving way made itself heard. She paused to rescue her endangered garments, the shawl slipped from her grasp, and she was alone in the crowd. She stood still, thinking that when they lit up she should see the cross and be able to make her way to it.

And at that moment the flood of red light shone out, flouting the old walls with a stage effect, mocking with its red glare the memories of blood, and tears, and martyrdom. The crowd exclaimed "How beautiful!" a murmur of applause and admiration filled the arena. And in itself the sight *was* beautiful, the effect startlingly brilliant: perhaps only the very fastidious were aware of its incongruity.

And, amongst so many hundreds present, who was it that by chance at that very moment was standing at Lisa's side; and when the sudden blaze revealed her to him, caught the little hand in his with an exclamation, "At last!"

The girl gave a cry of joy, and her other hand sought his, but almost in the same instant both were withdrawn.

"We are going away to-morrow," she said—there were tears in her voice.

Then Ray realised that it had been no delusion, no passing fancy, but that Lisa was in very truth dearer to him than anything the world held.

"Going away to morrow! and all this time we have never met. Why, how was that?"

"I don't know," she answered, shyly. "It was not likely we should meet. But I thought—when we were at Florence—I thought it would be different, this winter. It was silly of me."

"I was silly also, I suppose," said Ray, "for I too thought this winter would be very different. It has been my fault," he added. "Tell me what you have been doing; tell me all about yourself. We are together now—alone together, as we were in the train at Calais."

Lisa laughed at the recollection. The lights had all died out before she remembered that it was her duty to try and join the others; but torches and oil-lamps were flaring now, it was no longer difficult to find one's way about. Mrs. Gore came up to them.

"Ray," she said, "is it too much to ask you to take me to the carriage? Horace and Ada have forgotten me—I expected to find *you* disengaged." She glanced coldly at the beautiful girl on his arm; but her look softened a little before the child-like, up-turned eyes that met hers.

Ray said a few words apart to his mother, earnest words, and as she listened, the expression of her handsome face changed. Fate had conquered; her plans were defeated. *She* had known right well that in another twelve hours Lisa would have left Rome, and, once gone,

would, in all probability, have drifted on the stream of life far apart from her son. But she was too wise to fight against fate. Chance had brought them together, and if what her boy said was true—if with so-and-so only could he be happy, she would not oppose him. She spoke kindly to Lisa, bidding her keep with her, while Ray was despatched to find the rest of the party; and before he returned the two were friends.

"And do *you* care so very much to see Naples, my dear?" asked Mrs. Gore at last.

"I don't know—I—shall be sorry to leave Rome," said Lisa, stammering.

"How would it do if you were to spend this fortnight with me? Your family could reclaim you on their way through Rome again, if they really intend returning to England via Perugia and Florence. It would be a charity to me. Miss Dalrymple is going to be married, you know, and I have not a soul but Raymond to speak to. Do you think they would trust you to me, my dear, and should you like to come?"

And thus, to Lisa's infinite wonder, it was settled. What arguments were used to obtain her sisters' consent she never knew, but the plan was arranged that night. Before the fortnight was over, Ray had spoken. The girl understood, then, all the silent pain of the last few months, but she understood also all the happiness of the present.

It was in the month of June that a fair young bride left the old house in Nottinghamshire.

"Why! what is this?" she exclaimed, as she stumbled into the carriage in a manner very destructive to her new-born matronly dignity.

"My darling," answered her husband, "it is the red bag. You don't suppose we shall ever travel without one, do you? But for that red bag of your aunt's, we might never have found each other. We met by chance, Lisa."

She laughed and shook her head gaily.

"We met *twice* by chance, Ray. If it had not been for the second meeting in the Coliseum ——"

But Lisa was not allowed to finish her sentence.

A CYPHER TELEGRAM.

ANGLO-AMERICAN TELEGRAPH COMPANY.

John Bolton & Co., Liverpool.

To Preston, Banks, & Co., New Orleans.

Kildare—Description—Scared—Ecuador—Pot—Screamer—Shrimp—Betsy—Nameless—Bobby—Bellona—Obscure—Numantia—Rattletrap—Richard—Sackbut—Sally—Salmon—Penholder.

19 words at 4*s.* 8*d.**—£4 8*s.* 6*d.*, 21/1/75. Time 2–25 P.M.

THE above meaningless and rather odd jumble of words is a literal copy of a cypher telegram, sent from a firm of cotton merchants in Liverpool to their agents and brokers in New Orleans.

There is an old saying that one half the world does not know how the other half gets on. It is specially true with reference to the great cotton trade of Lancashire, of which the rest of England generally is in a state of the most wonderful ignorance; cotton, and all concerning it, excepting in the shape of calico, being among the greatest and most inscrutable of mysteries to those not immediately concerned. Perhaps a glimpse behind the scenes into one of the curiosities of the cotton trade may not be without attraction to the uninitiated.

It must be understood that cypher telegrams are totally distinct from cypher, or secret, writing: the one being employed solely for secrecy, without regard to length; the other being contrived so as to condense a message into as small a space and as few words as possible.

The second column of the first page of the *Times* is a perfect magazine of curious, and generally absurd, cypher writing; and almost every school-boy has some pet system at his finger-ends; but in both these, the words and sentences, however disguised, are written out at full length, and are frequently easy to decipher by an expert or anyone who chooses to take the trouble. In the cypher telegram, on the contrary, one word is made to stand for a complete sentence, and without the key, that word is simply an enigma, unreadable to anyone.

No doubt these condensed messages are in use all over the world, but the Atlantic cable certainly has a monopoly of them; hundreds of cypher telegrams, almost entirely concerning "cotton," being sent every day.

The item for telegrams (or, as they are technically called, cablegrams) in a merchant's office is something very serious, ofttimes amounting to

* Since writing the above, tariff has been reduced to 2*s.* 8*d.* per word.

one hundred pounds a week. The price per word being a consideration, the aim is to send as few words, and convey as much information, as possible. A great number of cypher codes are in use, composed generally of columns of words or figures (single letters are not allowed by the telegraph company) answering to every possible emergency. These codes are kept profoundly secret, and to prevent the clerks and employés in the offices interpreting and divulging the message, a secret understanding often exists between the principals to read the cypher backwards or forwards half a dozen words. The one from which the message above is taken is contained in a good-sized book, and presents the most unintelligible aspect to an outsider. Indeed, such a queer combination of words as "scared, pot, screamer, Bobby, and shrimp" might lead one to the conclusion that the cotton merchants were given to indulge in an eccentric species of wit, peculiar to themselves; but the words have a stern significance that means "business," and woe to the unwary mortal who should venture to suggest that the ghost of a joke lurked in their unsuspecting syllables. They form a cypher telegram of the most unrelenting "business aspect," even the diminutive "shrimp" bearing a grim message of special intelligence: and the very unsentimental Christian names, answering to the names of various firms, who are wont to be addressed by much more respectful titles.

It is necessary to take notice that the cotton bought by cable is still in America or on the sea; in fact, it is often bought, re-sold, and re-bought again perhaps half a dozen times before it ever touches the shores of England.

The translation of the telegram given above is as follows:—

Kildare Description Scared	We have sold to Kingston & Co., Preston, 500 bales (of cotton) at 7¾ (per pound), good quality, colour, and staple. Terms laid down by steamer. Bills of lading to be sent through Messrs. Baring Brothers.
Ecuador Pot	Buy for John Smith & Co., 200 bales at 8 5/8, with fine, long, even staple; inferior bales will be rejected. Ship by steamer.
Screamer	Execute this order, if possible; it may lead to a large business.
Shrimp Betsy	Do not insure for Brown & Co.: they will attend to their own.
Nameless Bobby	Bush & Wilson are not satisfied with their lot: it is not up to the mark. Use more care. Take special care to ship no bales showing sticks or sand.*

* A tobacco-pouch, a doll's frock, a piece of sugar-cane, and a very large centipede, have been found in one bale; so this precaution is not unnecessary.

Obscure	Your letter is not to hand; if important, cable particulars.
Numantia Rattletrap	The *Numantia* is making a long voyage; fears are entertained of her safety.
Richard Sackbut Sally	Is James Rochdale good? and to what amount? Sharp is speculating. Be careful with him.
Salmon Penholder	The Manchester market is excited and rising rapidly.

This cablegram is a fair specimen of the kinds that are daily passing by hundreds through the Atlantic cable. Their journey is not only very long, but very circuitous. A message from Liverpool to New Orleans goes first to London, from thence back to Holyhead and across the Irish Sea to Dublin; from Dublin to Valentia, the little rocky promontory washed by the everlasting billows of the Atlantic. Here the Atlantic cable really begins, and the message flies two thousand miles under the ocean to Cape Race, a wild headland in Newfoundland. Its submarine career is not even yet ended, for from Cape Race to Cape Breton there are fifty miles of sea to be traversed. From Cape Breton the telegram is forwarded to New York, and from thence across some two thousand miles of American prairie and forest land, till at last it reaches its destination, New Orleans. The total of its journeyings to and fro is about five thousand miles. The time which is taken by one of these travelled telegrams varies very much according to the state of business on the main lines, the Atlantic telegram having to wait its turn with other telegrams going shorter distances. Could the whole line be cleared from Liverpool to New Orleans, the time occupied would be merely the necessary delay at certain places to read the message and re-telegraph it onwards. Almost the shortest message on record is one that was despatched about six o'clock in the evening from Liverpool to New Orleans, to which an answer was returned before ten o'clock the same night, which, considering the round-about route and frequent stoppages, was wonderfully quick.

The favourite time of day for telegraphing is about two o'clock, and for a very significant and curious reason.

The time in New Orleans is six hours behind ours in England, so that a telegram sent from here about one or two p.m. reaches New Orleans about nine or ten in the morning of the *same* day. Thus the merchants in Liverpool and Manchester have time to collect their orders in the forenoon and cable them out to their agents in time for the beginning of morning business in New Orleans.

In reference to this natural phenomenon, the Americans say that "as usual they get the better of John Bull, for *they* know the morning before what the Britishers *do* in the afternoon next day."

PARKWATER.

By the Author of "East Lynne."

CHAPTER XVI.

AT MRS. COOKE'S.

IT is something marvellous—the ways and means employed by the metropolitan police when they are bent upon obtaining information. None know how they do it, or when they do it; save to themselves, their inquiries are secret as ever were those of the French inquisition. By eleven o'clock the following morning the police knew all about the suspected house, what character it bore, and who lived in it. A widow lady of great respectability was its occupant, with her two servants: she had lived there for many years.

About twelve o'clock on that same day a gentleman stood before the house; a tall, well-dressed, middle-aged man, of superior manners. He knocked and rang, as though he felt himself to be somebody of consequence. One of the maids opened the door.

"Is Mrs. Cooke at home?"

"Yes, sir."

Without ceremony or any kind of invitation, he walked at once into the hall.

"I wish to see her."

"What name, sir?" asked the servant, preparing to show him in.

"Mr. Smith."

Whether Mr. Smith was his real name or not, is no matter to us. It did for the servant, as well as any other. Mrs. Cooke was seated in her parlour; a handsome, well-appointed room. Mr. Smith saw a tall, stately lady, dressed in rich black silk and a widow's cap. She was looking over some account-books, but rose at the visitor's entrance and laid down her spectacles. Amongst her friends was a gentleman named Smith, and she advanced to shake hands, but drew back at meeting a stranger.

"Ma'am," he began, in a low, cautious tone, as soon as the door was closed, drawing, unasked, a chair near to hers, and sitting down in it, "I have come to seek a little private information from you. I am a member of the detective police."

Mrs. Cooke was shocked and startled. A detective officer had always been associated, in her mind, with a blunderbuss and two horse-pistols. She nervously began to draw on her black lace mittens,

which lay on the table, but her shaking fingers could hardly accomplish it.

"Don't be alarmed, ma'am," he said, with a voice and smile tending to reassure her. "My visit has nothing formidable in it. Look upon me as an acqaintance only, who has called to sit half an hour with you."

"Sir," she answered, "I have lived to six-and-fifty years, and never had anything to do with the police in my life, or my husband either. He was in Somerset House, and I can assure you we never did anything to bring the notice of the police upon us. All we have ever done, or said, might be laid open to the world."

"Had *you* fallen under their mark, I should not come to visit you in this private manner," was his composed reply. "I only require a little information from you; which I think you can afford me."

"Dear me!" groaned Mrs. Cooke.

"Do you live in this house alone with your two servants?"

"Until last week I did. I suppose, sir, I am compelled to answer your questions?"

"Madam, yes. Or you may be called upon to answer them in public: which would be less pleasant to you. Since last week, who has resided in your house?"

The intimation did not tend to reassure Mrs. Cooke. But never a thought crossed her of refusing to answer, and she resigned herself to the situation.

"A newly-married gentleman and his wife came to reside with me last week. My house is large for me since my husband died, and they have taken part of it. They entered last Wednesday."

"Respectable people, I conclude?"

"Respectable! Sir, it is Mr. Frederick Lyvett, a son of the great Lawyer Lyvett; their firm is one of the highest in London. The Lyvetts live in the greatest style at the West End."

"I know them," nodded the officer. "Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett. Just married, are these parties?"

"About a fortnight ago."

"Who was the lady?"

"I know very little of her. I believe she was inferior in position to Frederick Lyvett, and his friends were against the match. She was a Miss May, and resided somewhere in Brompton. But, sir," added Mrs. Cooke, while the stranger was making a note of her last words, "I feel that there is something mean and dishonourable in thus giving information of the affairs of other people. It is what I have not been accustomed to do."

"Nevertheless it is necessary," he answered, in a semi-impatient but very decisive tone, as if ignoring the scruples. "They came in on Wednesday afternoon. Did they bring any children with them?"

"Oh dear, no. I said they were just married."

"Did any children, or child, come to visit them that day, or the next? Any young boy—say two years old, or approaching to it?"

What doubt, what feeling came over Mrs. Cooke at this question perhaps she could not herself have explained. She did not answer it, but her face grew white, and she sat gazing at the officer. Did the account she had read of the little child in blue, who was found in the Regent's Park, arise unaccountably before her? He drew his chair closer, and his voice took a sound of confidence.

"Mrs. Cooke," he said, "by the expression of your face, I think you now begin to suspect the drift of my questions. A sad deed has been committed by some one, and certain facts which have come to our knowledge would seem to point to a suspicion that an inmate of your house may have been connected with it. It is your duty to throw upon this matter any and every light that may be in your power; and the law will demand it of you."

"What deed is it?" ejaculated Mrs. Cooke.

"I ask if you saw any child here with your lodgers?" he continued, passing by her question. "Did you see any child with them?"

"A woman, evidently a countrywoman, saying she was from Suffolk, did bring a child here on the Wednesday, an hour or two before they came home," replied Mrs. Cooke, unmistakably much pained at vouchsafing information, yet afraid to withhold it.

"Yes. Well, ma'am? Pray proceed."

"She said the child was one that Mrs. Lyvett had placed at nurse with her, but she could no longer keep it, because she and her husband were going out to Australia. Sir, suppose I decline to furnish these particulars—to answer all these questions? Have you the power to compel me?"

"Yes, madam. At a police-court, before a magistrate."

The alternative was not palatable, and Mrs. Cooke resigned herself to her fate without further struggle. "The woman wanted to leave the child in my charge," she continued.

"Did you take it?"

"Of course not. I allowed the woman to wait here until they arrived, and she then carried the child upstairs to Mrs. Lyvett."

"Was Mr. Lyvett there?"

"He was gone out. The woman stayed with Mrs. Lyvett in her bedroom, and we heard the child crying. Afterwards, one of my servants, in passing the rooms, heard the woman hushing him to sleep. After that the woman left the house."

"How long was she with Mrs. Lyvett?"

"About—I should think, three-quarters of an hour. Nearly that."

"And what became of the child?"

"I don't know. I wondered what did become of him; for when

the woman left I saw no child with her. I asked Mrs. Lyvett about him the following morning, and she replied that the woman had taken him with her. She had said the same thing the night before to one of my maids, who went up to ask whether anything should be prepared for the baby's supper. It surprised me very much; for though I saw the woman leave, I did not see the child. Still, I supposed that it must have been so, for we certainly neither saw nor heard traces of the child after her departure."

"Neither saw nor *heard* any?" repeated the officer.

"None whatever."

"Did you chance to hear the woman's name?"

"She told me it was Thrupp."

"Now, madam, bring your thoughts to bear, if you please, on the following evening, Thursday. Did Mr. and Mrs. Lyvett dine at home? I presume their dinner-hour is late?"

"Six o'clock. Only Mrs. Lyvett dined on Thursday evening. Mr. Frederick went to his father's to dine."

"She was alone, then?"

"Yes, she was."

The officer stopped for a minute, considering. When he resumed, the tone of his voice was low and grave; as if conscious that he was asking a grave question.

"Do you happen to know whether Mrs. Frederick Lyvett went out that night?"

Mrs. Cooke hesitated. She would have given all the world to avoid this.

"Madam," said the officer, somewhat sternly, "you *must* speak, and speak freely."

"Mrs. Lyvett did go out. She went out without anybody knowing it, and left the hall door open. By which means, a tramping beggar got inside the house, and startled us."

"At what hour did she go out?"

"It is impossible to say precisely. The servant fetched down her coffee-cup before nine, and it was between half-past nine and ten when we found the tramp in the hall."

"What time did she return?"

"She returned with her husband. It was getting on for eleven."

"With her husband?" he repeated quickly and possibly in surprise, only that the tone of a wary police-officer rarely betrays any.

"Yes, with her husband. I was sitting here, and heard his cab stop. They came in together."

"They may have met at the gate," mused the inspector to himself. "Did you observe how she was dressed, madam?"

"Not particularly. Except that she wore a very large, dark shawl, which I thought she must be smothered in, so hot a night."

"And a veil?"

"Yes; for she kept it down. Mr. Lyvett stopped to say good evening, as they passed this door, and I spoke to Mrs. Lyvett about the beggar, and requested her in future to ring for a servant to show her out."

The detective looked over his note-book. "I have forgotten one question in its order," he said. "What clothes did the child wear?"

Mrs. Cooke's voice sank to a whisper. "When his cape was off, I saw he wore a blue frock and pinafore."

"Did you perceive anything strange in Mrs. Lyvett's manner between Wednesday, when the countrywoman was here, and Thursday evening?"

"Nothing strange. She had an attack of illness once or twice, which was attributed to the fatigue of travelling."

"What sort of illness?"

"Ann, who saw her, said she shook worse than one in the palsy, and had a cold, white look."

The officer coughed, a peculiar cough. "The rooms they occupy were open, I suppose, to your servants on the Wednesday and Thursday?"

"Quite so. As they are now. It is Ann only who waits on them."

"Is Ann a discreet girl?"

"Discreet, sir! In what way discreet?"

"Can she keep a silent tongue?"

"I think she can. She is a very good girl."

"Allow me to ring for her," he said. And without waiting for permission, he rose and rang the bell.

Ann herself answered it, and stood with the door in her hand.

"Come in," said Mrs. Cooke, and the officer rose and closed the door behind her. She looked surprised, half-frightened, a short, pale, quiet-mannered young woman. "Ann," began her mistress, "this gentleman wishes to ask you a question or two. Be particular in replying."

She turned to face the stranger; who looked at her keenly as he entered on his inquiries.

"You wait upon Mr. and Mrs. Lyvett, I am informed by your mistress."

"Yes, sir."

"Make beds, sweep rooms, and such-like work?"

"Yes, sir."

"Last Wednesday, after they came here, and the day following, were the rooms quite open to you?"

"Open, sir?" repeated the girl, as if she scarcely understood the question. "Yes, they were open."

"You saw nothing to induce you to suppose anything was lying hid—any bundle, for example?"

"I never thought anything about it, sir," was Ann's answer, wondering to herself what the drift of all this was. "There was nothing hid that I noticed."

"Closets, cupboards, were all open?"

"Yes, I think so. Except one closet," added the servant, carelessly, as if she thought that of little consequence. "The key of it was mislaid."

"Ah!" remarked the officer, briskly, a keen look of intelligence rising to his countenance and fading again. "When was that?"

"On the Wednesday evening, sir. I was going to hang the dresses up which the lady had left about, and I could not find the key of the closet, the one in the dressing-room, where the pegs are. It was locked, and the key gone."

"Did you ask for the key?"

"No, sir. On the following morning, Mr. Lyvett rang the bell and asked me for it. And then the lady said perhaps she might have taken it out unintentionally and had got it somewhere. She would look and see after breakfast, she said, and I came down again."

"Did she speak readily?—at once?"

"No. Not till Mr. Lyvett pressed for the key, and seemed displeased, telling me I must find it. He seemed to think that I must have taken it out."

"Was that closet open, do you remember, during the day, Thursday?"

"I am sure it was not open, sir, when I made the bed. It may have been when I put the rooms straight at night, but I did not notice. The next morning I saw it was open, and Mr. Lyvett's things were placed in it."

"Mrs. Lyvett was ill on one, or both, of those days. What was the matter with her?"

"She said she was tired with the railway journey. She shook a good deal."

"Did she look terrified?"

"Well, she did, sir," was the servant's reply. "At least, so it struck me."

The officer asked a few further questions, but she could say no more of import. He rose from his chair, drew up his form to its full height, and placed his hands upon her shoulders. "Now, my girl, do you know what I am? I am an officer in the detective police force, and you have been under private examination. You must observe strict silence as to what has passed in this room, to your fellow-servant and to everybody else. Shall I swear you to it?"

The girl gasped, and looked for help to her mistress. He saw his end was gained. Little need to swear her, even had he seriously meant it.

A few minutes longer with Mrs. Cooke, whom he left with a pale, distressed, uneasy face, and the officer went straight back to the station. There he found a countrywoman waiting. She also had come about the matter. A Suffolk woman, who gave her name as Thrupp, and said she had nursed a child, whom she fancied answered to the description of the one in the advertisement—could she see it?

Yes; she was taken to see it. It was lying in its little blue clothes, just as it was found. The woman gave one look, and fell in a passion of grief upon the board. It was indeed the same child. Mr. Smith waited until her grief had spent itself; and then took her away and inquired particulars. Mrs. Thrupp gave them willingly and eagerly, telling all she knew. Mr. Smith listened and made notes.

"You don't know the mother of this little child, you say?"

"We was never told, sir, who his mother was. The lady was in a fine way with me for bringing him up to Lunnon unexpected, as she called it, and said, What was she to do with him till his mother come back to town? She offered me money to take him with me in the ship, or to get him a place to be at in Lunnon: a handful o' gold, she showed me. But I told her how it was with me—that I was put to it myself for time to get things ready for the start; and I left him there with his little bundle o' clothes."

"He was alive then—when you left him?"

"Alive, sir! Bless him, he was alive, and sleeping sweetly on the grand high bed where I laid him. The tears were wet on his cheeks, though, for the lady had been in a fierce temper with him; but he'd have forgot it all when he awoke."

"Mrs. Lyvett was in a temper, was she?"

"Yes, sir: she seemed sadly put out at my taking him back. Like enough, sir, she have a good temper in general; but the best o' tempers gets ruffled at times."

When the officer had done with Mrs. Thrupp for the present, she was at liberty to return to Rotherhithe. But that same day she and her husband received an intimation that they could not sail for Australia in the vessel about to quit the docks on Saturday: they must wait for a later one. The delay, however, would not be at their own cost.

"I must inform you of one thing," said the officer, as a parting word. "You are not the first in the field—as to the reward."

"Ay," she mused, "I do mind me that the news-sheet spoke of a reward. What did you please to say, sir?"

"Another has been here before you, and given information which led us on the same scent, so that the reward will be his, not yours."

"The reward mine!" uttered the poor woman, aghast. "Sir, do you think I would touch a reward for telling out about the killing of little Randy? No, never. Let them take it that has got heart to do it, but it shall never trouble me nor my husband."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE APPREHENSION.

THE morning above spoken of is not yet done with, or the day either. Ann, Mrs. Cooke's housemaid, allowed Mr. Smith to show himself out of the house. She had retreated to the kitchen, and was leaning against the ironing-board, not quite sure whether she stood on her head or her heels. Her faculties were in a state of utter confusion: it would have been something could she have unburthened herself to her fellow-servant, at that moment making a tart on the table; but the relief was denied her.

"Be you asleep?" suddenly demanded the tart-maker. "Because that was the drawing-room bell that rung."

Ann started from her reverie and ran upstairs. Mrs. Lyvett had sat down to the piano and was trying some new music. Ann was kept waiting her pleasure for some minutes, door-handle in hand. That was just Mrs. Sophia Lyvett's way.

"Oh," she said, when she condescended to turn round, "in ordering dinner I forgot to say that we shall want it earlier than usual."

"At what time would you like it, ma'am?"

"Five o'clock. Who was that gentleman?" carelessly added Mrs. Lyvett, striking a few notes as she spoke, and keeping her face turned on the music.

"Gentleman?" faltered Ann.

"The one who has just been here. He paid a pretty long visit."

"It was—it was a gentleman to see my mistress, ma'am," replied Ann, making the best answer she could, and intensely wondering that Mrs. Lyvett should chance to speak on that one subject.

"To see your mistress! What was his business with her?"

"I don't know, I'm sure, ma'am."

"Oh, it is of no consequence. I saw him come in at the gate, and fancied I knew him—that's all. Dinner at five, mind."

Now in reality Mrs. Lyvett had not fancied that she knew the gentleman; but her mind was in a very uneasy state just then, and she suspected an enemy in every bush. Looking from the window, she had seen the stranger come in, and she watched for his going away, restlessly marvelling all the while what it was he wanted.

They were going that night to one of the theatres. Frederick Lyvett had engaged a box the previous day, bringing the tickets home as a little surprise for his wife.

The day wore on. In the afternoon Mrs. Lyvett went out. She did a little shopping, bought a shell wreath for the hair—shell wreaths were in fashion then—bought a few other pretty trinkets which took

her fancy, ordered home some fine fruit, regardless of the cost, set down her name as a subscriber to a new and expensive work just coming out, and also became a first-class subscriber to one of the large circulating libraries, which had a depôt in the neighbourhood, paying for the year in advance : five guineas. She seemed determined to let her husband's money fly. She told them she should want books changed every day, and they must hold themselves in readiness to send to her as often as she required. She looked out six or eight volumes to take with her then, had a cab called, and went home in it. The library people thought her a very peculiar-mannered lady, restless, absent, and irritable.

It was then nearly half-past four. Sophia rushed into her bedroom, intending to dress for the theatre before dinner, sat down to the glass and did her hair, placing in it the ornamental flowers she had bought, and then rang for Ann to help her with her dress. Fred Lyvett came home and dressed also. They kept the dinner waiting. It was nearly half-past five when they sat down to it.

When the cloth was removed, Ann placed the wine on the table, then ran downstairs to fetch up the coffee which had been ordered. She placed the waiter, with the two cups and the silver coffee-pot, before Mrs. Lyvett.

"And now, Ann," Mr. Lyvett said, "you must go to the stand and get a cab. Choose a nice one."

The servant did as she was ordered : went to the stand, chose a cab, and returned in it. As she got out of it, a gentleman came up to the gate. Ann recognised him for the one who had given her such a fright in the morning—Mr. Smith. His dress was altered, and he had now an official look. Two policemen were sauntering up behind : the girl thought they belonged to him, and her heart leapt into her mouth with alarm.

"For whom have you fetched that cab?" he inquired.

"For Mr. and Mrs. Lyvett, sir," she answered, in a tremor. "They are going to the theatre."

"Good. We may want it. Consider yourself engaged to me, my man."

The driver touched his hat, and looked on with curiosity. He also had noticed the policemen, and knew they were not on ordinary duty : a cabman's instinct on these points is keen. Ann flew up the path to the door, which she opened with her latch-key. It came across her mind to lock and bar it against those dreaded officers : but she did not dare to do it. She held it open for Mr. Smith to enter : it was only he who had as yet passed in at the gate. "What could his business be?" thought Ann, in a flutter : but she had a vague consciousness that it related to Mr. or Mrs. Lyvett.

"Don't shut the door," said Mr. Smith to her. "Leave it on the latch."

Mrs. Cooke had seen the officer's approach from her parlour window; the cook, who happened to look up from the kitchen area, saw it also; the former came out of her room, and the latter came peeping up the stairs. Ann had observed "silence" according to orders; but it was beyond human nature not to be a little mysterious as to the visit of the gentleman in the morning, and the other servant's curiosity had been aroused in regard to him.

"Mr. and Mrs. Lyvett are in their sitting-room, I believe, madam," he remarked to Mrs. Cooke, who had stepped forward to meet him in the hall.

"Yes," she answered, her hands working nervously one over the other: "I believe they are."

He turned to Ann. "Step up and announce me. Mr. Smith. I'll follow you."

"Oh, sir—if you please—*must* I do it?" she stammered, with a white face and chattering teeth: for she had now become thoroughly frightened.

He looked at her. "No. You would do more harm than good. I will announce myself."

He went softly up the stairs, as he spoke, and the three frightened women clung to the balustrades and gazed after him. Suddenly the cook caught hold of her mistress, and gave a smothered cry. Standing against the wall by the hall door, were the two policemen, who had quietly entered.

Mr. Lyvett was still in his place at table. Mrs. Lyvett had drawn away from it, and leaned back in an easy-chair. The detective glanced at her with a detective's critical eye. He saw a handsome young woman, in a rich evening dress, gold ornaments on her fair neck and arms, and the braids of her fair hair interspersed with a wreath of white flowers.

Mr. Lyvett rose in surprise. As well he might; to see a stranger walk coolly in, and close the door after him. His first impression was that some friend of Mrs. Cooke's had entered their room by mistake. But he was abruptly undeceived.

"I am deeply grieved to come here on my present errand," said the officer, "and apologise for the intrusion; but the law knows no favour. My business is with this lady."

"What business?" haughtily demanded Frederick Lyvett.

"I am sorry to say I have a warrant for her apprehension."

"What do you mean?" broke from Mr. Lyvett, after a pause of consternation. "This lady is my wife."

"I know it. And I can only say I hope that things, which at present look—look dark, may be satisfactorily cleared up, so that Mrs. Frederick Lyvett may be restored to her friends."

Frederick Lyvett, his mind in a state of confusion, spoke a few

passionate words. "How dared an insolent policeman invade his house—how dared he insult Mrs. Lyvett?" Their purport was something to that effect.

"I am not an ordinary policeman, Mr. Lyvett," was the calm answer. "There is my card: you will see what I am. I have the pleasure of being acquainted with your father and Mr. Castlerosse: not that they have any knowledge of the present matter: and I came here myself this evening, instead of despatching my subordinates, that this arrest —which *must* be made, understand me—should be accomplished with as little offence to your feelings as is possible."

The officer's address and manner were so business-like and temperate, that Frederick Lyvett insensibly calmed down. A sudden thought occurred to him.

"Should my wife, as Miss May, have contracted a debt, or debts," he said, "your recourse will be against me now; not against her."

"It is not an affair of debt," answered the detective. "I wish it was. The warrant sets forth a criminal charge."

"Nonsense!" contemptuously rejoined Mr. Lyvett, when he had taken in the sense of the words. "Criminal charge! I tell you, that you must be labouring under some extraordinary delusion. You have mistaken my wife for somebody else."

The officer drew a paper from his pocket, and opened it. "The warrant," he said, "is against Sophia Lyvett, otherwise May, otherwise Penryn."

Mr. Lyvett, somewhat staggered, turned his eyes on his wife, as she cowered in her chair. He never saw a countenance express so much horror. It was perfectly livid. And the dark circles, which he had observed round her eyes once before, but some three or four days ago, had reappeared.

"Come, madam," said the officer, "the quicker these things are concluded, the less pain they bring. I pledge you my word that all shall be done as considerately as possible. No one shall go inside the cab but myself, unless you wish your husband to go. Allow me to ring for a shawl, or cloak."

"I will never go with you," she gasped, while her husband stood spell-bound. "I dare you to arrest me."

"Madam, you are already arrested, and it will be well to accompany me quietly. I have policemen at hand, but I do not wish to call for their aid, unless you compel me."

She made a movement to rise, probably in resistance, but sank back again, motionless and breathless.

"You have killed her!" exclaimed Frederick Lyvett, in agitation, and quite beside himself with a most horrible perplexity. It was his wife's aspect that confounded him: if ever a face and manner spoke of conscious dread, hers did. But he thought still it must be some

preposterous error. "How dare you come here with your wicked and absurd tales, sir? Help! help!" he added, ringing the bell.

"Hush-ssh!" quickly interrupted the officer. "Pray don't get the room full; for her sake; for yours. Raise her head up. Only a little water," he called out, darting to the door, and looking down the well of the staircase. "*One* of you can bring it up."

It was Mrs. Cooke who entered with it; either from a feeling of curiosity, or the more considerate one of shielding Mrs. Lyvett from the gaze of servants. Mr. Smith nodded in approval, and closed the door the instant she was in the room.

"A pretty disgraceful business this is," exclaimed Mr. Frederick Lyvett to her. "That police-officers should be permitted to enter houses as they please ——"

"I would have given any money, Mr. Lyvett, rather than it should have happened here," she interrupted. "It will be a stain upon my house for ever."

The words—nay, it was the tone, rather than the words—struck oddly upon the confused mind of Frederick Lyvett. "What is it you accuse my wife of?" he asked, turning to the officer.

"The charge is that of ——"

"What?" cried Frederick Lyvett; for the concluding word was spoken in so low a key that he did not catch it.

"Yes," said the man, repeating it in his ear. "That is the charge, Mr. Lyvett. I do not, you understand, take upon myself to say it can be substantiated."

The poor young husband staggered back to the seat opposite his wife, his lips as blanched as her own. "What does it all mean?" he gasped.

"Well," returned the officer, willing to spare his feelings, "the accusing circumstances are not pleasant. I would not advise you to inquire into them to-night, Mr. Lyvett."

"But I will inquire into them; ay, and refute them," retorted Fred Lyvett. "It is wild. It is preposterous. Why don't you arrest me for high treason?—or for housebreaking? It would be as much in accordance with probability."

Mr. Smith came to the conclusion that, to avoid further trouble, it might be better, after all, to whisper a few details to the young man. And he took him aside for the purpose.

Frederick Lyvett turned hot and cold as he listened, and passed his handkerchief nervously over his brow. For, even while the officer spoke, certain little matters connected with the previous Wednesday evening rose up in his memory, and they seemed to confirm the tale. But he would not give in one inch: and, indeed, his mind was in so bewildered a state that he did not comprehend half that was said.

"Who would be likely to bring a child here, and leave it with my wife?" he demanded. "I should think Mrs. Cooke can refute that."

"On the contrary, I fear Mrs. Cooke can confirm it," spoke the officer, with suavity. "Madam, I must beg of you to speak."

Mrs. Cooke turned round her distressed face. She was bending over the unhappy wife, who lay back in her chair, apparently in a state of semi-consciousness.

"I am very, very sorry to be obliged to confirm it," she said. "I would give half I am worth not to be able to do it. When you arrived here on Wednesday, Mr. Frederick Lyvett, the woman was waiting with the child."

"Whose child was it?"

"Sir, I only know what the woman said. I think it is very cruel that I should be obliged to relate this."

"Madam," interposed Mr. Smith, "you must see that there is no help for it."

"There is none," added the young man in his excitement. "What did the woman tell you?"

"The woman did not precisely know whose child it was; she had never been told, she said. But she believed it to be a Mrs. Penryn's —a relation of your wife's."

Frederick Lyvett looked from one to the other in perplexity, and his face grew hot on a sudden. Mr. Smith had just whispered to him that Miss May had occasionally given her name as Mrs. Penryn. Still he did not comprehend the details that were being told to him.

"If the woman did bring a child here, she must have taken it away again."

"Well, no," said Mrs. Cooke. "I—I believe she did not."

"Go on. Tell *all*," wailed Frederick Lyvett. "Whether the tale be true or false, it must be grappled with."

"When the woman came downstairs from her interview with your wife, Mr. Lyvett, and left the house, I spoke to her from my sitting-room window. So far as I saw, she had certainly not the child with her, and I assumed that it was left with Mrs. Lyvett. After your dinner, I sent Ann up to ask whether she should make the baby some food. Mrs. Lyvett's answer was that the child had left with the woman. It surprised me very much; for I thought I could have taken upon myself to say most positively that the child did not leave with the woman; that it had remained upstairs and was still in the house then."

"And—where was the child?" asked Mr. Lyvett.

"That is the chief point," said the officer—for Mrs. Cooke seemed determined not to reply. "The child appears to have been brought into this house, and never to have left it—alive. The woman tells me —I saw her this morning—that she got it to sleep, and placed it on Mrs. Lyvett's bed. When next seen it was in the Park, dead."

The face of Frederick Lyvett was distressing to look upon. Bit by bit, the story was gaining upon him. In her compassion for him, Mrs. Cooke strove to say a few words, ideas that had occurred to herself, in exculpation of the unhappy wife. And it was very probable that she hit upon the truth.

"The cords from Mrs. Lyvett's boxes were lying on the bed and floor at the time," spoke she, in a low tone. "It is possible that in a moment of temptation—of embarrassment—having a child, she perhaps knew not how to account to you for, thus thrown upon her hands ——"

Frederick Lyvett interrupted the words with a groan. The story was becoming to him all too clear.

"Or even the poor baby might himself have got hopelessly entangled with them," added she, putting the point with deprecation as one that could not be maintained. "But—Mrs. Lyvett was evidently very ill that evening, as you must remember, sir; and I think—I do think—she might not have been accountable for her actions."

Frederick Lyvett shook his head. "No child could have been here a night and a day without my knowing it: as you—turning to the officer—wish to make out that this one was."

"Alive, probably not," was the answer. "A dead child could be concealed anywhere. Say in a cupboard—or closet."

The tone was significant. Recollection flashed over Frederick Lyvett: of the disappearance of the closet key, and his wife's agitation when he inquired for it.

Not much less agitated was he now. Point after point seemed clearing itself terribly to his mind; objection after objection seemed to slip from his hands.

Had he not seen her outside, in that large, hot shawl when he drove up from dining with his father?—and had he not gathered that she had been out for a considerable time? Hope did in truth seem to be slipping totally away from him, and he resigned himself to what must be.

Poor Sophia Lyvett, more dead than alive herself, was made ready for her departure, Mrs. Cooke assisting to change her robes for a dress more suitable. Thus she was conveyed to a place of detention for the night: Mr. Smith entirely declining to comply with the request urged upon him, that she should be allowed to stay where she was until the morning. He and her husband went inside the cab with her as far as the doors, one of the policemen sitting with the driver.

(*To be continued.*)

FIVE-O'CLOCK TEA.*

MY DEAREST JANE,—I fear you'll think I'm very poor in pen and ink; for seven months have passed away (how quickly!) since my wedding-day, and you have never had a word to tell you what has since occurred.

Well, nothing great, I'm bound to own: for Hugh and I live much alone; and being rather short of cash, and much averse to "going smash," we take our modest pleasure here—within our own domestic sphere. For me, I'm growing quite a cook; for Hugh, he means to write a book; we form a hundred plans a day how to contrive to pay our way, nor altogether lose the power of asking friends to spend an hour.

Now, in the present race for wealth, when all is bought but joy and health, this would be rather hard to do, but for one fact—or rather two. The first, that friends care less by far for what you *ha* 'an what you *are*. The second, that without a shock one may dri. . at five o'clock.

Oh! excellent five-o'clock tea! Unparalleled five-o'clock tea! muffin, a "lunn," and a cup of Bohea; the people you like best to hear and to see; some gossip and chat, a song, and all that, and your duty is done, you've had plenty of fun, and of worries, and fuss, and extravagance—none.

Just think of the anguish of people of taste, of dinners to give, and no money to waste; the fish over-boiled, the side-dishes spoiled; your servants can't wait, and your "lions" come late, and the whole's overruled by inimical Fate.

I *can't tell* you the comfort and saving to me of this *sweet* institution of five-o'clock tea.

And then, my dear Jane, there are people, you know, who are terribly fast or tremendously slow: are gossips, or snobs, or disgracefully mean; old maids who are blue, or youths who are green; and saints, in whose presence one feels quite a sinner (what a bore and a nuisance to ask them to dinner!). But now, since this fashion, one's quit—don't you see?—by asking them just to a five-o'clock tea.

And then there are persons so sadly genteel, that they make you quite wretched at every meal: for if glasses for fingers, or claret, or hock, are wanting, their feelings receive such a shock that at mutton and beef and such trifles as those, they sit and do nothing but turn up their nose. Of course one must bear them; but then, dear, you see, there's so much less of them at five-o'clock tea.

So I wish her all joy, whoever she be, who first invented the five-o'clock tea! And new-married people, who haven't much money, should "tea-pot" that lady—that *would* be so funny!

Good-bye, my dear Jane, I will sign, for variety,

Your affectionate QUILLS

(Of the Owlet Society).

* Written for the Owlet Society, an Amateur Essay Club.

A. HOPKINS. J. SWAIN.

On the Thames at Midnight.

THE ARGOSY.

AUGUST, 1875.

A SECRET OF THE SEA.

By the Author of "In the Dead of Night."

CHAPTER XXII.

GERALD'S CONFESSION.

GERALD was away from Stammars for several days, and it was during his absence that Mr. Pod Piper's interview with Eleanor took place. Gerald, metaphorically speaking, flew back on the wings of love. It seemed months ago since he spoke those few memorable words to Eleanor, and he was burning to see her again: burning to speak of the love that filled his heart, firm in his determination, when once he should see her again, not to leave her till he had won from her a promise to become his wife.

He got back to Stammars on a certain day in time for luncheon, and found Sir Thomas somewhat better in health. Lady Dudgeon and Miss Lloyd were out visiting, and were not expected home much before dinner-time. Gerald was in a restless and anxious mood, and could not settle down to anything. To wait quietly indoors was intolerable. For more than an hour he wandered aimlessly up and down the grounds, but was at last driven by a shower to take shelter in the conservatory. There he found Sanderson, the old gardener, plodding away as usual. He was rather a favourite with the old fellow, simply because he never took the liberty of plucking a flower without first asking Sanderson's permission to do so.

"Eh, sir! but I heard some queer news about you t'other day," he said, as he hobbled up to Gerald.

"News about me, Sanderson! I should very much like to know what it was."

"I'm no so certain that I ought to tell ye. And yet, seeing that

there's a leddy in the case, it's perhaps only right that you should know."

"A lady in the case! You must tell me now, or I shall die of curiosity."

"I suppose I must tell ye, or else you'll no be satisfied," he said. "But let us sit down while we talk. Sitting's as cheap as standing, and I'm no so young as I have been, Mr. Pummery."

"It was that bit imp of a lawyer laddie," resumed Sanderson, as soon as he and Gerald were comfortably seated, "young Brazen-face I call him, from Mr. Kelvin's. He was here t'other day, here in this very spot, and Miss Lloyd happened to come in quite accidental at the time. I'd been hard at work all the morning, and was just resting a bit behind the bushes, when all at once I heard young Brazen-face mention your name, and that made me listen to hear more."

"And what had the young vagabond to say about me, Sanderson?"

"Why, he said that you were as poor as a church mouse, and that his master lent you fifty pounds to buy your clothes with."

"There's nothing very bad in that."

"But he said the reason why you came to Stammars was that you might fall in love with Miss Lloyd and marry her, because she was worth twenty thousand pounds."

"The young scoundrel! And he told that to Miss Lloyd?"

"That's just what he did! And he said that Miss Deane knew all about it, and that it was all a planned thing between you and her."

Gerald was dumbfounded. He could not find a word to say for a little while. What must Eleanor think of him! It would not be a very difficult matter to set himself right with her if he chose to do so, but a climax was being forced upon him which he would gladly have delayed for a little while longer.

"But what was Miss Lloyd's answer to all this?" he said at last.

"She didn't seem to say much; but she may have thought all the more," answered Sanderson.

"It was enough to make her think. I am really very much obliged to you for telling me."

"I dare say you wouldn't care to have it talked about, Mr. Pummery?"

"Why, no, Sanderson, I think not. Even if this foolish accusation were true, it would be as well, for Miss Lloyd's sake, not to let it go any further. There's a sovereign for you to buy snuff with. A still tongue, you know, is a sign of a wise head."

"How has that young scamp got to know all that he has told Eleanor?" was Gerald's first thought as he walked slowly back into the house. But that was a question which it was impossible for him to answer. How different was the spirit with which he entered the house from that which had possessed him when he left it but one short hour

before! The summer sunshine of his love had suddenly been clouded over: the landscape had darkened: a storm was at hand.

How fortunate it was, he said to himself, that he had not met Eleanor before encountering Sanderson! He did not want to see her now; it was requisite that he should decide upon some particular line of action before meeting her again. He sat down in his easy chair, and shut his eyes, and bent himself to the task of thinking—no very easy task just now, so strangely was he fluttered by the news which had been told him. Two or three different courses were open to him: which one of them should he choose?

He sat without moving till the dinner-bell rang; then, all at once, he made up his mind as to the line of action he would adopt. Having excused himself, on the plea of fatigue, from going downstairs, he lighted his lamp and seated himself at his writing-table. Then he took pen and paper, and wrote as under:—

"Sir,—From certain private information which has reached me, I have reason to believe that a great proportion, if not the whole, of the property which my uncle, the late Mr. Jacob Lloyd, of Bridgeley Wells, died possessed of should devolve on me as being his legal representative. As I am given to understand that you had the management of my late uncle's affairs, will you kindly inform me, at your earliest convenience, whether it is within your knowledge that the facts of the case are as stated by me, and if so, what steps it will be requisite for me to take in order to prove the validity of my claim? I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

"Gerald Warburton."

This letter, addressed to Matthew Kelvin, was sent under cover by Gerald to a friend in London, from whose house it was professedly written, with a request that it might be posted.

Four days later, through the hands of his London friend, Gerald received the following answer:—

"Sir,—In reply to your favour of the 25th inst., I beg to inform you that the state of Mr. Kelvin's health at the present time is such as to entirely preclude him from giving any attention to matters of business. He hopes, however, to be sufficiently recovered in the course of a few days to be able to reply fully to the questions contained in your letter. I am, Sir, respectfully yours,

"John Bowood."

Gerald's letter to Kelvin had been marked "Private." All letters not so marked were opened by Mr. Bray, the chief clerk. The private letters were picked out and sent upstairs. Kelvin, at this time, was so ill that Olive was deputed to open these letters, and read them aloud

to him, and pencil down his remarks respecting such of them as required answering. Thus it fell out that Gerald's letter reached her among a number of others one morning. She always opened the letters and read them over herself before submitting them to her cousin, by which means she could often give him the pith of a letter without troubling him with unnecessary details.

Gerald's letter startled her not a little. It was requisite that she should have time to think it over, and to consider in what way it might or might not interfere with her own special plans; so she slipped it quietly into her pocket, and said nothing to Kelvin that morning about it.

Locked up in her own room, she read the letter over and over again. After all, it was, perhaps, quite as well that this Mr. Warburton had discovered something as to the real facts of the case. Her cousin Matthew was so thin-skinned that, although he had agreed to the temporary concealment of certain facts, he evidently shrank from inflicting on Eleanor Lloyd the blow which ought to follow such concealment as a logical sequence. But should this Mr. Warburton come forward, the blow struck would be just the same, but her cousin would be spared its infliction. Eleanor Lloyd would still be deprived of name, wealth, and position, while a final sting should reach her from the hands of Olive herself, in the care she would take that, if not in one way then in another, Miss Lloyd should be duly enlightened as to the character and antecedents of the man to whom she had given her heart and promised her hand. Still, it might be as well to temporise a little, to delay the climax for a week or two, if it were only that the bond of love which bound Miss Lloyd to Pomeroy might grow stronger with the lapse of time; for the more she learnt to love Pomeroy, the deeper would be the wound that a knowledge of his treachery would inflict.

When Olive had once adopted this line of argument, it was easy for her to persuade herself that the wisest thing she could do would be to keep her own counsel for a little while as to Mr. Warburton's letter. In her cousin's present state of health such a communication would only serve to worry him, and could answer no practical end. Meanwhile, she would take upon herself to have the letter replied to, but in such a way that it would be impossible for her cousin to be offended with her when the time should come for him to be told all that she had done. Not being a person who was in the habit of acting on rash impulses, she kept the letter over-night, with the view of ascertaining whether the resolve which she had come to to-day would bear next morning's cold confirmation. Next morning changed nothing; and as soon as breakfast was over she went downstairs to her cousin's private office, and sent for Mr. Bowood, one of the clerks, and dictated to him that letter which we have already seen in the hands of Gerald. A

that Olive wanted just now was a little delay, and this she succeeded in securing.

But what was Gerald to do next? After what that meddlesome imp of a Pod Piper had told Eleanor, it was quite evident to him that all prospect of her listening favourably to his suit was at an end, unless he could offer a frank and full explanation of the facts. He had relied upon his letter to Kelvin bringing matters to a crisis without any further impulse on his part, but that hope was now at an end, unless he could afford to wait for Kelvin's recovery at some indefinite future time. But he could not afford to wait. He had shut himself up in his own rooms, on the plea of indisposition, while awaiting the lawyer's answer, in order that he might run no risk of meeting Miss Lloyd till he knew what that answer was. But this could not go on any longer. A meeting with Eleanor was inevitable, but on what terms could they meet, unless he were prepared with some sort of an explanation beforehand?

His most straightforward course would certainly have been to explain frankly to Eleanor who and what he was, and to tell her all his reasons for seeking to win her affections under a fictitious name. But he still shrank, with a repugnance which he seemed quite unable to overcome, from being the first to tell her that strange story which she must one day be told, but which, it seemed to him, his lips ought to be the last in the world to reveal. That story would deprive her of name, wealth, position—of everything, in fact, that her life had taught her to hold most dear. Not even to set himself right in her eyes, not even to free himself in her thoughts from a vile imputation, could he consent that from his hands the blow should come. That the blow must fall some day he knew quite well, but Kelvin was the man from whom it ought to emanate; and now, after what had happened, no matter how soon it came. To this conclusion had he come before writing to Kelvin, but the lawyer's answer left him exactly where he was before. Something he must do himself, or else shun Eleanor altogether: but what must that something be?

Was there no middle course open to him? he asked himself; was no scheme of compromise possible by means of which, while setting himself right with Eleanor, he might be spared the necessity of becoming the mouthpiece of a revelation which, if told by him, might perchance shatter his dearest hopes for ever?

After a restless and miserable night, which seemed as if it would never come to an end, he fell into an hour's sound sleep, just as it was time to get up; but when he woke he seemed to see a glimpse of daylight through the midst of his perplexities. Again he took pen in hand, and here is what he wrote on that occasion :—

"Mr. Pomeroy presents his compliments to Miss Lloyd, and having something of a special nature which he is desirous of com-

municating to her, he would esteem it a great favour if Miss Lloyd would allow him the privilege of a few minutes' private conversation at any time and at any place that may be most convenient to her."

An hour later, he received the following line in answer :—

"Miss Lloyd will be in the library at three o'clock this afternoon."

Poor Eleanor! What a miserable time was that which she had passed since that afternoon when Pod Piper spoke to her in the conservatory! An hour before, she would have staked her existence on Pomeroy's truth and sincerity; and now, proof had been given that he was nothing better than a common adventurer, who had sought to win her because she was rich! Truth and sincerity seemed to have vanished from the world. Nowhere could she feel sure that she had a friend who cared for her for herself alone, who would be the same to her to-morrow as to-day, if, by the touch of some wizard's wand, her money were suddenly turned to dross. How she wished that her father had left his riches elsewhere! How she wished that necessity had driven her to earn her living by her fingers or her brain! Then, if friendship or love had chanced to come to her, she would have known that they were sincere, because she would have had nothing but themselves to give in return. The poorest shop-girl, who walked the streets on her sweetheart's arm, was richer than she in all that makes life sweet and beautiful.

Sometimes Eleanor recalled certain words of warning which Lady Dudgeon had on one occasion addressed to her. "Beware, lest you fall into the hands of some swindling adventurer," her ladyship had said, "of some romantic rogue, with a handsome face and a wheedling tongue, who, while persuading you that he loves you for yourself alone, cares, in reality, for nothing but the money you will bring him."

Had not her ladyship's warning borne fruit already?

But ten minutes later she would reproach herself for thinking so hardly of Pomeroy. No, notwithstanding all that she had heard, she would not believe that he was an adventurer. There was a mistake somewhere, she felt sure.

How much of the unhappiness of life is due to misunderstandings and mistakes which a few frank words of explanation would often serve to put right!

But supposing Mr. Pomeroy offered her no explanation? Supposing he persisted in his suit, and went on making love to her on the assumption that after what had passed between them he would not be repulsed? Then, indeed, painful as such a course might be, she would feel compelled to tell him all that young Piper had told her, leaving him to deny it or explain it away as he might best be able.

There were some other words of Lady Dudgeon's which she could

not quite forget, and which seemed to have a more apposite force at the present moment than when they were uttered. "If you become the wife of Captain Dayrell, you will have the consolation of knowing that you have not been sought for your money alone. Dayrell is rich enough to marry a woman without a penny, if he chose to do so." She did not like Captain Dayrell, and she would never become his wife, but for all that Lady Dudgeon's words would keep ringing in her ears.

When she heard Sir Thomas mention one day at dinner that Mr. Pomeroy was back again at Stammars, she felt strangely moved. However great his offences might be, his image still dwelt in her heart, and there was something delicious in the thought that he was once again under the same roof with her. She longed and yet dreaded to see him; but as day passed after day without giving him to her aching eyes, her longing deepened into an intense anxiety. She heard from those around her that he was not very well, and that beyond seeing Sir Thomas, on business matters, for an hour every morning, he kept to his own rooms. But if he were well enough to see Sir Thomas, he was surely well enough to see her—to see the woman whose lips he had kissed, and into whose ears he had whispered words that could never be forgotten! But perhaps he held himself aloof on purpose that they might not meet. Perhaps he was desirous of shunning her—wishful that she should understand that what had passed between them had better be forgotten, and that in time to come they must be as strangers, or, at the most, as mere acquaintances, to each other. If he could forget, she could do the same: her pride was quite a match for his. It was a time of bitter perplexity and trouble.

When Eleanor walked into the library to meet Pomeroy, she had his note hidden in the bosom of her dress. She looked very cold and very proud. Her coldness and her pride notwithstanding, she had kissed his letter and cried over it; but of that Gerald was to know nothing. He bowed gravely to her as she entered the room, but he did not speak, and that of itself was enough to send a chill to her heart. Then he placed a chair for her, and she sat down, but during the interview that followed, Gerald stood with his elbow resting on the chimney-piece.

"Miss Lloyd," he began, when Eleanor was seated, "I have taken the liberty of asking you to meet me privately, being desirous of saying something to you which I could not well communicate by letter, and which, perhaps, I ought to have told you long before now." His tone was very measured and grave. Was it possible, Eleanor asked herself, that she could be listening to the same man who had pressed her to his heart in a rapture of love only two short weeks ago?

"You asked me to meet you, Mr. Pomeroy," she said, "and I am here to listen to whatever you may have to say to me."

Evidently he hardly knew how to begin what he wanted to say.

"I am here to-day, Miss Lloyd," he said at last, "to make a very painful confession, and I must ask your forgiveness if, in the course of it, I am compelled to speak more plainly than under other circumstances I should venture to do. Some three months ago I entered the service of Sir Thomas Dudgeon as his secretary. At that time I was doing nothing, or next to nothing: I was a very poor man; the situation was thrown in my way, and I accepted it. But I accepted it, Miss Lloyd, not for the sake of the salary or emoluments attached to the position, but simply in order that by its means I might be brought near to you, and have an opportunity of making your acquaintance. It had been hinted to me that the only mode by which I could recoup my fortunes was by marrying an heiress. I was told that you were an heiress, and that there was just a faint possibility that I might succeed in winning your hand."

"Your confession, sir, has at least the merit of frankness," said Eleanor, with a quivering lip.

"Its frankness is the only merit it can lay claim to. I came to Stammars, Miss Lloyd, and I made your acquaintance. From that moment I was a changed man. Whatever mercenary motives, whatever ignoble ends, may have held possession of me before, they all vanished, utterly and for ever, in that first hour of our meeting. I felt and knew only that I loved you. In that love—so different from anything I had ever felt before—lay a subtle alchemy, that had the power of transfusing into something finer and purer everything base that it touched. It has refined and purified me: it has given to my hopes and inspirations a different aim: it has taught me to look at life and its duties with altogether different eyes."

He paused for a moment. Eleanor sat without speaking. What, indeed, could she say? But she had never loved him more than at that moment.

"A fortnight ago," resumed Gerald, "carried away by the impulse of the moment, and my own long suppressed feelings, I said certain words to you which I ought not to have said—at least, not till after I had told you what I am telling you to-day, and not till I knew that I was forgiven. I am here to-day, Miss Lloyd, to crave your pardon for having given utterance to those words, and to ask you to look upon them as if they had never been said."

"Why need he do that?" whispered Eleanor in her heart.

"After the confession which I have just made as to the motives which first led me to become an inmate of this house, I dare hardly hope ever to attain again to that position in your regards which I flattered myself—wrongly enough, perhaps—was mine but a little while ago. How greatly I regret having forfeited that position I should fail to tell you in any words. But I may, perhaps, hope that my candour will meet

with sufficient recognition at your hands to induce you to overlook all that has gone before, and to treat me in time to come, not as an utter stranger, but as one who ——"

He paused, at a loss for words.

"No, not as an utter stranger, Mr. Pomeroy," said Eleanor, gently. "Your confession, as you term it, has been nearly as painful to me as it must have been to you. I almost forget what the words were to which you have made allusion: something foolish, I do not doubt. In any case, we will both try to forget that they were ever uttered. Good-bye."

She held out her hand as she spoke. Gerald took it, and pressed it respectfully to his lips. Then her eyes met his, while a faint smile, that was more akin to tears than laughter, played round her mouth for a moment: for a moment only—the next, she was gone.

CHAPTER XXIII.

KELVIN'S ILLNESS.

MATTHEW KELVIN found himself considerably better the morning of the day following that on which he had been taken ill at Stammars, but in the course of the forenoon he had a sharp return of the previous symptoms. Then it was that his mother insisted upon sending for Dr. Druce, the family practitioner, and Olive seconded the plea. Up to this time, Kelvin had strenously refused to let anyone be called in, but he now yielded reluctantly to his mother's wishes. He had never been ill enough to need the services of a doctor since those far-off juvenile days of measles and scarlatina, and he was loth to believe that there was any necessity for such services now.

However, in the course of the day, Dr. Druce looked in. He felt his patient's pulse, looked at his tongue, and asked the usual questions. Then he took off his spectacles, pursed up his mouth, shook his head at Kelvin as though he were an offending schoolboy, and delivered himself oracularly. "Disordered state of stomach. Nothing serious. Put you right in a day or two. Must diet yourself more carefully in future. What really charming weather we are having."

Everybody agreed that Dr. Druce was seventy years old: many averred that he was nearly eighty. The latter people it probably was who asserted that the doctor was purblind, that his memory was half gone, that it was hardly safe for him to practise, and that he ought to retire and make room for a younger man. The doctor, however, still considered himself to be in the prime of his powers, and as he had attended Mrs. Kelvin herself for a long series of years, and was, besides, an old personal friend of that lady, it was not likely that she would think of calling in any other assistance to her son.

As soon as Dr. Druce's visit had relieved in some measure his mother's anxiety, Kelvin began to express his desire that Olive should get back to Stammars without delay. "I shall be all right in a day or two," he said, "and my mother, or one or other of the servants, will see meanwhile that I want for nothing."

"I shall wait till to-morrow, and see how you are then, before I think of going back," said Olive. "You know that my aunt can do nothing in the way of waiting upon you, and as for the servants, they are all very well in their places, but they would be quite out of their element in a sick-room."

"A sick-room, indeed! You talk as if I were going to be laid up for a month," said Kelvin, impatiently.

"I talk simple common sense, Matthew," said Olive. "Besides, Lady Dudgeon promised me a holiday a month ago, and I don't see why I should not take it now. In fact, I may tell you that I have already written to her ladyship telling her not to expect me back for three or four days."

"Cool, I must say. Not but what you are welcome to stay here as long as you like: cela va sans dire; and I am greatly obliged to you for what you have done for me already. But as for spending your holiday in waiting on me—that's pure nonsense. A week at the sea-side, now, is what you ought to have."

"Which to me would mean a week in a strange place among people whom I never saw before and should never see again. I would sooner hear Sophy and Carry their lessons from year's end to year's end than indulge in such a holiday as that."

"I shall be better to-morrow, you mark my words if I'm not, and then we'll have a little further talk about your holiday."

But he was by no means better next morning: rather worse, indeed, if anything. It was nothing, Dr. Druce said. The medicine sent by him had, perhaps, had the effect of increasing the sickness, but the patient himself was no worse than on the preceding day. A little time and a little patience were needed. It was not to be expected that an evil which had been growing for months, perhaps even for years, could be put right in a day or two.

Kelvin said nothing to Olive that day about going back to Stammars. He was very ill indeed, and he could not help admitting to himself that it was a great comfort to have Olive to wait upon him. His mother, at the best of times, would not have been of much use in a sick-room, seeing that it was a matter of difficulty for her to walk across the floor, and the very fact of Matthew being so ill only tended to make her worse than usual. As for a hired nurse, Kelvin shuddered at the thought. But such a nurse as Olive made all the difference. "You might have been born to this sort of thing, from the way you go about it," he said to her.

"You forget that for many years my father kept a chemist's shop in a poor neighbourhood," she replied, "and that I seem to have been familiar with sickness and disease since I can remember anything."

"You are a clever girl, Olive, and I believe you could doctor me a deuced sight better than old Druce. I remember when I was a lad hearing your father say that you knew almost as much about his drugs and messes as he did himself."

Olive's back was towards him as he spoke, and she did not answer for a moment or two. "That is a long time ago," she said, in a low voice; "and such knowledge as that is easily forgotten. Then again, you remember how poor papa always would exaggerate a little."

How deft and noiseless were all her movements in the sick man's room! How soft, and white, and cool were her hands! Her dress never rustled, her shoes never creaked, her voice itself was attuned to the place and the occasion. She was never hurried; nothing seemed to put her out. She would either read to her cousin, or talk to him, or sit for hours by his side doing some noiseless stitching that would not have disturbed the slumbers of a mouse. When he was more than ordinarily restless she would bathe his head with eau-de-Cologne or aromatic vinegar, or sometimes, leaving his door ajar, she would go into the other room and play some of his favourite airs softly on the piano, and so, little by little, charm him out of his restless mood and soothe him off into a refreshing sleep.

It was on the evening of the second day that Mrs. Kelvin called Olive on one side. "You will not leave me to-morrow, unless my dear boy is better?" said the old lady, with tears in her eyes.

"I will not leave you to-morrow, or next week, or next month, unless my cousin is better," said Olive. "You may take my word for that."

"Heaven bless you, dear!" said Mrs. Kelvin, fervently, and she made as though she would kiss Olive, but the latter started back. "I think Matthew is calling me," she said, and she hurried into the other room.

One day passed after another, and still Dr. Druce's patient did not improve. "These cases are sometimes very obstinate indeed," said the old gentleman, pleasantly, as he peered into his snuff-box in search of a last pinch. "And then they not unfrequently affect the liver. Now, I don't know a more obstinate noun substantive in the whole of the English language than your disordered liver. As for the increasing weakness that you complain about—why, I don't care so much about that, because it tends to keep down any febrile symptoms. Of course, if you can't eat you can't keep up your strength, but when you once get a turn, you know, you'll have the appetite of a wolf—I may say, the appetite of a wolf in winter."

"What a comfort it is, dear," said Mrs. Kelvin to Olive, "to think that we are in the hands of such a nice clever man as Dr. Druce. He

has had so much experience that I believe he can tell at a glance what is the matter with a patient. Experience, in the medical profession, is everything."

Sir Thomas and Lady Dudgeon drove over to see Mr. Kelvin a couple of days before their return to London. They were greatly concerned at his illness. As regarded Miss Deane, permission was given her to stay with her cousin as long as it might be necessary for her to do so. The young ladies, her pupils, were gone to pay a long-deferred visit to an aunt of theirs, and it was quite uncertain when they would return.

One of Olive's difficulties was thus smoothed away for her without any trouble on her part.

A few hours after Sir Thomas's visit, Mr. Kelvin suddenly opened his hollow eyes. "Olive, where is my mother?" he asked, abruptly.

"She was tired, and she has gone to lie down for half an hour."

"Then you and I can have a little talk together."

Olive guessed instinctively what was coming. "If what you were about to say to me is not very important, I would leave it unsaid to-day, if I were you," she answered. "You have done more talking already than is good for you."

As if to verify her words, he was suddenly taken with a severe fit of sickness, which lasted several minutes and left him thoroughly exhausted.

Laying his wasted fingers on Olive's arm, and drawing her towards him, "What I was about to say was this," he whispered. "Since I have been lying here, I have had time to think of many things. But the thing that has weighed heaviest on my mind, the thing that I have regretted most, is my treatment of Eleanor Lloyd. It was you, Olive, who persuaded me to hide the truth from her, to let her live on in ignorance of her real history; to—to—you understand what I mean."

"You know what my motives in the matter were, Matthew," said Olive, in a low voice.

"Yes, I know quite well what they were, and very mean and despicable they seem to me now. Mind, I am not going to reproach you. The fault was mine in allowing myself to be persuaded by you. In any case, the past is the past, and nothing can alter it; but, so sure as I now lie here, the very first day that I can crawl downstairs, I will send for Miss Lloyd, tell her everything, and ask her forgiveness for the wrong I have done her!"

He said no more, but shut his eyes and seemed as if he were going to sleep.

Olive at this time had got Gerald Warburton's letter upstairs, and had, in fact, already answered it in the way that we have seen. For a moment she was tempted to show the letter to her cousin, but before she could make up her mind to do so, Kelvin was asleep or seemed to

be. So, telling herself that she did not care to disturb him, she let the opportunity go by, and as Kelvin, when he awoke, did not again recur to the subject, there seemed to be no reason why she should do so. Not much longer could the climax be delayed ; not much longer could Eleanor Lloyd be kept in ignorance : of that Olive was quite aware ; but she would, if possible, delay the revelation for a little while ; delay it till Mr. Kelvin should be thoroughly recovered from his illness, and having got rid of all his foolish sick-bed fancies, should be prepared to carry out the scheme in all its features as originally proposed by her and agreed to by him.

But when would Mr. Kelvin have recovered from his illness? That was a question which, as yet, Olive was not prepared to answer. Sometimes it seemed to her that her plot was slowly working itself round to the fulfilment for which she so ardently longed ; sometimes it seemed as if no such fulfilment were possible to her. That her cousin liked to have her by his side, liked to have her wait upon him, she saw clearly enough, and she fancied that with each day she became more indispensable to him. But was his heart touched by her devotion ; was he slowly but surely learning to love her? That was a question which at present she could in nowise answer. Time and patience might work wonders for her, and with them as her allies she saw no reason, when in her more sanguine moods, to despair of ultimate success. Having gone so far, having ventured so much, it was not likely, as she said to herself, that she should go back, that she should let herself be overcome by any childish timidity or nonsensical scruples, when, for aught she knew to the contrary, she might at that very moment be on the brink of success. She never knew what a day, what an hour, might bring forth. At some moment when least expected her cousin might put forth his hand and say to her, "Olive, my heart has come round to you again. I love you. Be my wife." If such a prize were not to be won without risk, she was prepared to run that risk, whatever it might involve.

There were times when Kelvin's mysterious malady caused him to suffer acutely. At such moments Olive was always by his side, "a ministering angel," as her cousin himself called her one day ; soothing him with the gentlest attentions, anticipating each want intuitively, making herself, in fact, so indispensable to him that after a while he could hardly bear to let her go out of his sight, and if, when he woke up, she were not by his side, he would cry, fretfully, "Where's Olive? Why isn't she here?" and toss and turn restlessly till he felt her soft cold hand laid on his brow.

But even Olive's nerves of steel gave way sometimes. When, at midnight, or later than that, she would steal out of her cousin's room in the hope of getting an hour or two's sleep, sleep would not come to her. All tired as she was, she would fling herself on her bed, and, burying

her face in her pillow, cry for an hour at a time as if her heart would break. To see the man she loved so passionately suffer as he suffered; to know that she had but to hold up her little finger, as it were, for his sufferings to cease, but that if she were to let her compassion so master her he would be lost to her for ever; to know that her only chance of winning him was to win him through those sufferings which she alone could soothe: to feel and know all this was at times, especially in the midnight darkness of her own room, torture unspeakable. But when, at cockcrow, the ebony gates of the realm of shadows and midnight fancies were silently shut, and when another day looked in at the windows with its clear cold eyes, the purpose of Olive Deane faltered no longer: her strong will re-asserted itself, and tears and compunction alike were for the time being thrust mercilessly out of sight.

"Oh, doctor, doctor, when are you going to get me downstairs again?" the sick man would sometimes wearily ask. "I am so terribly tired of lying here."

To which the old gentleman, tapping his snuff-box, would blandly reply: "That Mr. Liver is a deuce of a fellow to get right again when once he's really put out. So obstinate, you know, and all that. Wants a deal of coaxing. But we shall bring him to his senses by-and-by—yes, yes, by-and-by, never fear."

CHAPTER XXIV.

RECOGNITION.

THREE days after Mr. Van Duren's little birthday dinner at Greenwich, the following advertisement appeared in the second column of the *Times*:—

"*Albatross*.—Should this meet the eye of any person or persons who happened to be on board the schooner *Albatross* when she foundered off Marhyddoc Bay on the 18th Oct., 18—, they may hear of something to their advantage, by applying to Messrs. Reed and Reed, Solicitors, Bedford Row, London."

This advertisement was repeated every other day for three weeks. At the end of that time there came a response.

As it happened, Van Duren never saw the advertisement, and there was no one to show it to him; no one who knew what a terrible fascination such an announcement would have had for him. His newspaper reading was generally confined to the money article, the City intelligence, and the latest telegrams. For miscellaneous news and the leading articles he cared little or nothing.

Now that everything had been got out of Max Van Duren that could be got out of him, the motive that had induced Miriam Byrne to play the

part she had played existed no longer; and although it was needful that appearances should still be kept up, there was no longer the same strain upon her. While keeping Van Duren at arm's length, and permitting no lover-like familiarities, on the ground that as yet he was only accepted on probation, it would not have been wise, having an eye to future eventualities, to repel him too rigidly, or to have run the risk of frightening him away. He must be so kept in hand that a little coaxing—a smile, a look, a whispered word—could always lure him to her side. He would fain have been twice as loving, twice as assiduous in his attentions, as Miriam would allow him to be. "Wait," she would say, "wait till I have made up my mind, and then——!" a look would finish the sentence, a look which seemed to say, "You know very well that I shall end by accepting you, and then I won't object to your kissing me, or perhaps to kissing you in return." That, at least, was Van Duren's interpretation of it.

During the time that the advertisement was appearing every other day, Byrne seized the opportunity for obtaining a little rest and change. He and Miriam went back for a week to their old lodgings in Battersea, which they had not yet given up. Van Duren believed that they were going to the sea-side, but could not discover the particular place for which they were bound. Miriam put the case to him playfully.

"No, I shall not tell you where we are going," she said, with a smile, "because that would be merely offering you a premium to run down and spend the end of the week with us. I am going to leave you for seven long days. You will not know where I am, and I shall not write to you. I am going to test you—I am going to see whether you will like me as well when I come back as you do now."

"You should try me for seven years instead of seven days!" said Van Duren, fervently.

"Suppose I take you at your word, and stay away for seven years," said Miriam, with a mischievous sparkle in her eye.

"Like a knight of old, I should start in quest of you long before that time was at an end; I should search for you till I found you in your hidden bower, and then I should seize you, and carry you away with me, whether you liked it or no."

"Yes, and while you were riding off with me as fast as you could go, I should be searching slily for a joint in your armour, and when I had found it, I should stab you to the heart with my silver bodkin. What a romance it would be!"

"Especially for the poor fellow who was stabbed."

"He would live in song and story ever after, and that would be far more fame than he would deserve."

At the end of a week, Miriam and her father found themselves back in Spur Alley, and three days later there came a response to the advertisement. Messrs. Reed and Reed were called upon by two men

who professed to have been on board the *Albatross* at the time she foundered. One of these men was Paul Morrell, the mate of the ill-fated schooner; the other one was Carl Momsen, an ordinary seaman. An appointment was made for the following day, when Mr. Byrne came in person to examine them. A private room was set apart for the interview, and one of Messrs. Reed's shorthand clerks was there to take notes. The men were examined separately, and out of each other's hearing, but the evidence elicited from one was almost an exact counterpart of the evidence elicited from the other. The evidence of both of them may be summarized as follows:—

The *Albatross* sailed from Liverpool for Halifax, Nova Scotia, on the 17th October, 18—. She was not in the habit of carrying passengers, but on this particular occasion there was one passenger on board her who was said to be a friend of the owner. He was a foreigner, but spoke very good English. He had sandy-coloured hair, and wore small gold rings in his ears. Neither of the men knew his name. The *Albatross* was caught in a gale off the mouth of the Mersey. Next morning she sprung a leak, and a little while after the schooner's head was put about for Marhyddoc Bay. Outside the bay the vessel foundered, and the crew had barely time to take to the boats before she went down. At the last moment, the man with the earrings brought up out of his cabin what looked like a small portmanteau, it being covered with leather, but which he called a box. This box he wanted to take with him in the boat, but as the men had orders to take off and leave behind them all superfluous clothing, and as it was the merest chance whether even then the boat would not be swamped, it was quite evident that the box must be left behind. The man entreated and stormed, and offered a reward of five hundred pounds to anyone who would take his box ashore. But life is sweeter than five hundred pounds, and the box had to be left behind. The man raved like a maniac about the loss, but an hour or two after reaching shore he disappeared, and neither Morrell nor Momsen either saw or heard anything of him from that day forward.

After the examination was over, Morrell, as being the more intelligent of the two men, was asked whether he thought it possible that if he were to see the passenger of the *Albatross* he could recognise him again.

After so long a time it seemed very doubtful to him whether he could do so, he said, but he would be happy to try.

Accordingly, next day, while Van Duren was dining at his usual tavern, Morrell was instructed to walk into the room and call for some dinner, and see whether he could pick his man out of the assembled company.

About an hour later he rejoined Byrne in a private room of another tavern close at hand.

"I picked him out in a moment, sir," said the ex-mate. "Yes, the very moment I set eyes on him I knew him again. He's stouter and older looking, of course, and he's close shaved now, and wears no earrings; but, for all that, he's the same man."

"I think you told me the other day," said Byrne, "that you had nothing very particular to do just now?"

"Yes, sir, I did. I only got back from China a few weeks since, and, as I am getting on in life, it's just a toss up with me whether I shall go to sea again or settle down ashore for the rest of my days."

"Then you will have no objection to enter my service for a little while?"

"None whatever, sir."

"On Wednesday morning next I shall want you to go down from Euston Station to Marhyddoc, and there make certain inquiries for me."

"Nothing could please me better, sir. I've had plenty of travelling by water: a little travelling by land will make a pleasant change."

"Then meet me here on Tuesday evening at seven, and I will give you your instructions."

Before proceeding further, Byrne thought that he had better put Ambrose Murray in possession of what he had done since their last meeting, and seek his sanction to the steps he proposed taking next. Byrne accordingly sought Murray out at his lodgings, and the two men had a long consultation. Gerald, unfortunately, was at Stammars just then, and could not be present.

"Everything now hinges upon the result of Morrell's inquiries at Marhyddoc," said Byrne. "Should the report he will bring back with him prove a favourable one, then we may consider ourselves fortunate indeed—then we may take it that the best or worst will very soon be known to us. But should the result of his inquiries prove unfavourable to our hopes, then all that we have done—all my toiling and scheming, all the expense you have been put to—will have been next to useless. Van Duren's guilt as the murderer of Paul Stilling may have been morally proved to the satisfaction of you and me and one or two others, but that would be of no avail whatever in proving your innocence and in bringing home the crime to him. Unless we can wrest from the sea the terrible secret which it has hidden so carefully all these years, the guilt of Van Duren will remain unproved for ever. Beyond the point now reached by us it is impossible to advance a single step till we shall have made that secret our own."

"The sea has only been keeping its secret all these years that it might yield it up when the time should be ripe for me to ask for it. That time has now come. I ask for it, and I shall have it. Have no fear, my good friend, no fear whatever. Guided by an unseen hand, we have threaded a labyrinth from which at first there seemed no

possible outlet; and now that we have reached the gate, and are bidden to look for the key, can you doubt that it is there for the searching—can you doubt that we shall find it?"

"Cracked, to a certainty," muttered Byrne to himself, as he left the house. "And no wonder either, poor fellow, when one remembers all that he has had to go through."

Morrell went down to Wales in due course, and in due course he returned. His report to Byrne was of such a nature that the latter could not conceal his exultation. "We shall have him yet!" he exclaimed, much to the ex-mate's astonishment. "He has escaped for twenty long years, but the hangman's fingers shall unbutton his collar before he is six months older."

Then he went and saw Murray again, and it was arranged that they two, together with Gerald, if possible, should go down to Marhyddoc as soon as certain necessary preparations which would have to be made in London should be completed. Morrell, too, was to form one of the party.

Byrne and Miriam, meanwhile, went back to the house in Spur Alley. Van Duren was overjoyed to see them under his roof again. His time of probation would soon be at an end now: Miriam would soon have to make up her mind to the utterance of a definite "Yes," or "No." Now that she had come back, she seemed more kind and gracious to him than before, from which fact he did not fail to draw an augury that was favourable to his own wishes.

Ambrose Murray had his little portmanteau packed ready for the journey to Wales several days before the other preparations could possibly be completed. Miss Bellamy had never seen him so elated before. He went about the house singing to himself in an under-tone, or whistling snatches of old tunes that had been popular when he was a boy. That cloud of quiet melancholy, which would sometimes oppress him for days together, without a break in its dulness, had all but vanished, leaving but a shadow of its former self behind. Miss Bellamy had asked him several times to go and have his portrait taken, but up to the present he had always declined to do so. One fine day, however, after the journey to Wales had been decided on, he astonished her by telling her that if she would go and be photographed he would follow her example. "First of all, Maria, you shall be photographed by yourself," he said, "and then I'll be photographed by myself; and after that, what do you say to our being photographed together, eh? Such old friends as you and I are ought to be photographed together. But, above all things, Maria, don't forget to be taken with your locket."

This latter remark was a sly hit at the large, old-fashioned locket which Miss Bellamy wore round her neck on high days and holidays —at such times, in fact, as she wore her silver grey dress and her company cap, but at no other. Ambrose Murray could remember

Miss Bellamy wearing this locket when she was a girl of nineteen, and she wore it still. He often joked her about it, and would offer to wager anything that if she would only let him have a peep inside it he should find there the portrait of a certain handsome cornet of dragoons, with whom, according to his account, she had at one time a desperate flirtation. But he never had seen inside the locket, and Miss Bellamy was quite sure that he never would do so with her consent; for within that old-fashioned piece of jewellery was shut up the cherished secret of Miss Bellamy's life. Ambrose Murray's laughing assertion that in it was hidden the portrait of a man was so far true, but the likeness was not that of any young cornet of dragoons, but that of Ambrose Murray himself—of Ambrose Murray at two-and-twenty, with brown hair, and laughing eyes, and no care in the world beyond that of making up his mind which one out of a bevy of pretty girls he was most in love with. He fell in love, not with Miss Bellamy, but with her friend, and Miss Bellamy's secret remained buried for ever in her own heart. With the portrait were shut up two locks of hair: one lock was of a light golden brown colour, the other was white.

"There is room for another portrait," said Miss Bellamy to herself, with a sigh, when Ambrose Murray proposed going to the photographer's, "and then it will be full." She had left orders in her will that the locket should be buried with her. How her heart fluttered, how the unwonted colour rushed to her face, when Ambrose proposed that they should be photographed together! Years had had no power to weaken or alter her love, but she would have died rather than let Murray suspect for a moment the existence of any such feeling on her part. He knew it not, but it was a fact that, with the exception of a few trifling legacies, all her little property was bequeathed to him, or, in event of his prior demise, to Eleanor. In her secret heart she could not help dreading a little the coming of that time when father and daughter should learn to know and love each other. She must then, of necessity, fall into the background; she must then, of necessity, sink into little more than a mere cypher in the sum of Ambrose Murray's existence. Had Eleanor been a daughter of her own she could hardly have loved her better, and she told herself, times without number, that to see the girl and her father happy in each other's love ought to be sufficient reward for anyone who thought of others more than herself. And ought she not to study the happiness of these two, both of whom were so dear to her, rather than her own selfish feelings?

However sharp the pang might be, whatever the cost to herself might be, she would so study it—she would do her best to bring them together.

That time when Ambrose Murray was, as it were, living under the same roof with her was a very happy time for Miss Bellamy. Murray himself did not seem to know, or perhaps it would be more correct to

say that he never thought how greatly he was indebted to her. Beyond a flying visit now and then from Gerald, he had no society save that of Miss Bellamy, and of the children of the two houses in which he and she had apartments. He almost invariably took tea and supper with Miss Bellamy, and spent his evenings with her, and made, besides, almost as free a use of her sitting-room as of his own. He looked upon her, in fact, as he would have looked upon a sister to whom he was much attached, and that she regarded him in the light of a brother he was fully convinced.

An agreement had long ago been come to between Gerald and Miss Bellamy by which it was arranged that Ambrose Murray should be relieved from all pecuniary cares and liabilities. No one ever presented him with a bill for the rent of his apartments. The servant would ask him what he would have for breakfast or dinner, and whatever he might order was there for him ready to the minute, but no butcher or baker ever vexed his soul with unpaid accounts. Now and then he would find a sovereign in some odd place or other—in his razor-case, inside one of his gloves, or in the folds of his Sunday cravat. He would pick up the coin, look at it curiously for a moment or two, wondering how he could possibly have been so absent-minded as to leave money there, and then put it quietly into his pocket and think no more about it.

A brief telegram from Byrne reached Ambrose Murray one afternoon :

"Preparations completed. Shall be ready to start from Euston Square at nine o'clock on Saturday morning. Shall expect to find you on platform, unless I hear from you in course of to-day."

He was so fluttered by the receipt of this telegram that he could not eat any dinner. He at once sat down and wrote a note to Gerald, enclosing the telegram, and begging of him, if he could possibly do so, to join him in Wales early in the ensuing week. Then he said to himself, "I must write to Mary before I go. I feel sure that she is expecting a letter from me. But first the boat must be finished."

In a back-room he had fixed up a lathe, and a small joiner's bench, at which he occasionally amused himself. There were various kinds of useless knick-knacks that he could manufacture with some degree of skill, and the toys of half the children in the neighbourhood were mended at his bench. As soon as he had sent off his letter to Gerald, he shut himself up in his little workshop, and set to work busily to finish a little toy boat, which was half done already. It was a very small affair—a child's boat, in fact, cut out of a block of wood, and not more than a couple of feet in length. He worked at it till late that evening, and by noon next day it was finished to his satisfaction. Then he slept for an hour, and then he sat down to write his letter. This is what he wrote :—

"My Darling Mary,—I had a very strange dream the other night. I dreamt that I had written you a letter, and that when I had sealed it up I put it in a little boat, and let the boat and the letter float down the river with the tide. And in my dream I seemed to watch the boat till it got far out to sea, beyond the sight of any land. Then all at once the clouds gathered till the black edges of one of them seemed to touch the sea, and then from cloud and sea together there was formed a huge waterspout, that presently drew to itself and sucked up my boat and letter. And when they vanished, the waterspout vanished also, and presently the clouds broke away, and in the heavens one splendid star was shining, which seemed to me as a token that you had received my letter.

"My darling, I have translated this dream as a message from you, telling me what I ought to do. Very often of late your face has appeared to me in my dreams, but when I have tried to speak to you an invisible finger seemed to be laid on my lips, and my heart could only yearn dumbly towards you. But now you have shown me a way by means of which a message may reach you—for from you alone that dream could come. The boat is ready, and the midnight tide will take it down to the sea, and then at dawn of day the waterspout will come and lift my letter up into the clouds: but of what will follow after I know nothing.

"My darling! day by day the time of our separation grows shorter: soon shall we see each other again, and all these long years of waiting and trouble will seem but as a dim vision of the night, fading and vanishing utterly in the bright dawn of an everlasting day. The purpose that has held me and chained me to this life for so long a time is now near its fulfilment, and after that I feel and know that I shall not be long before I join you. Soon the time will be here when I can tell everything to our child—our child, Mary! whom I have never seen since she lay an infant in your arms. Very precious will her love be to me, but not so precious as yours. I shall stay with her a little while, I shall tell her all about the mother whom she cannot remember, and then I shall go to you.

"To-morrow night, darling, you will come to me in my sleep, will you not? Then, when I see you, I shall take it as a token that you have had my letter.

"Soon I will write to you again—when the sea shall have given up the secret which it has hidden so carefully for twenty years. Till then, adieu. Your husband, "Ambrose Murray."

This singular document Mr. Murray sealed up carefully, and then addressed it, "To my Wife in Heaven." Then leaving a message for Miss Bellamy, who happened to be out shopping, that he was going out for the evening, he took a hansom to London Bridge and

started by the next train for Gravesend, taking the boat and letter with him. He had still some hours to wait, but at midnight, having made a previous arrangement with a boatman, he put off from the pier stairs, and was pulled slowly out to the middle of the black and silent river. A few stars could be seen overhead; now and then the moon shone down through a rift in the clouds. The whole scene was weird and ghostly. The tide was running down rapidly. A cold wind blew faintly across the river, as though it were the last chill breath of the dying day. They halted in mid-stream just as the clocks on shore began to strike twelve. Then Murray took his toy boat out of its brown paper covering, and having firmly fixed his letter in it by means of a strip of wood intended for that purpose, he leaned over the side and placed it gently on the surface of the stream. On this point, at any rate, poor Murray was still insane.

"What are you after, master?" cried the boatman, whose suspicions were beginning to be aroused.

"I am sending a letter to my wife," answered Murray, as he lifted his hat for a moment. "See how swiftly it starts on its journey. And now I can see it no longer. But no harm will happen to it. How pleased my darling will be when she reads it!"

The boatman said no more, but thinking that he had got a crazy person to deal with, whose next act might be to jump into the river himself, he made all possible haste back to shore.

It happened, singularly enough, that on the Wednesday previous to the Saturday fixed on by Peter Byrne for the journey to Wales, Mr. Van Duren entered his room and announced to him and Miriam that he had been called suddenly from home on business of great importance. Byrne, as yet, had given no hint of any intention on his part to go out of town, and he now determined to say nothing about it till after Van Duren's departure.

"How long do you expect to be away, Mr. Van Duren?" asked Miriam, as she glanced at him out of her big black eyes.

"Four or five days, at the least, I am afraid," he said. "It is a source of great annoyance to me to be called away at this time, but unfortunately there is no way of avoiding it. You may depend upon my getting back as quickly as possible," he added, significantly.

"The house will seem very lonely and dull without you."

"I am afraid you flatter me," he replied, slowly. Then he suddenly drew his chair up to her side and took her hand in his. "Miriam," he said, "do you know that the time you asked for in order that you might be able to make up your mind is nearly at an end?"

"Yes, I suppose it is," said Miriam, in little more than a whisper.

"As soon as I return from the Continent, I shall expect you to give me an answer."

She did not speak.

"If I only knew what the answer would be!"

She smiled, and gave him another glance out of her black eyes.

The colour mounted to his forehead.

"You won't keep me in suspense much longer?" he said. "You will let me know my fate, won't you, as soon as I come back?"

For the first time she bent her eyes on him fully and steadily. "Yes, Mr. Van Duren," she said, "you shall know your fate when you get back from the Continent."

Before she knew what he was about to do, he had seized her hand and pressed it passionately to his lips. She shuddered from head to foot as she withdrew it from his grasp. Bakewell knocked and entered. "Your hansom is at the door, sir, and you have only just time to catch the train."

Van Duren arose and made his adieus. "Your father still seems very weak and feeble," he said, in a low voice, to Miriam, as he stood for a moment at the door. "I am afraid that the warm weather has not done much to benefit him."

"Will anything in this world ever do much to benefit him?" she answered. Then there was a last shake of the hand, and then she watched him go downstairs. As soon as she heard the front door clash she ran to the window, and waved him a last adieu as he was driven away. "Shall I ever see him again, I wonder?" she whispered to herself. "I hope not."

"Farewell, Max Jacoby, otherwise Van Duren!" cried Byrne, as he took off his wig and flung it across the room. "When next we meet it will be under very different circumstances."

Pringle, as was usual whenever his master was from home, was left in special charge of the premises. At such times he slept in the house, and was waited upon by Bakewell and his wife. As it was necessary to give some sort of an intimation that they were going out of town, Byrne, on the Friday morning, sent Miriam downstairs to see Pringle, and tell him that they had suddenly made up their minds to take a holiday at the sea-side for a week or two. Pringle was most affable and polite, and desired Miss Byrne to give his respects to her papa, and say how sincerely he hoped that the sea air might prove of benefit to him. At the same time, might he be permitted to ask for an address to which he could send any post letters that might happen to come for Mr. Byrne after his departure?

As Miriam had not mentioned the place to which they were going, this seemed only a fair question. However, she had an answer ready. She wrote down Miss Bellamy's address, to which place Pringle was requested to send all letters.

That same evening, between eight and nine, Miriam and her father

went out for a little while to make a few final arrangements for their journey in the morning. They had hardly been gone five minutes when Pringle happened to find himself on the landing opposite the door of their sitting-room. On turning the handle the door was found to be unlocked and the gas only half turned down—signs that the inmates might be expected back before very long.

Leaving the door wide open, Pringle glided into the room. He was dying to know to what place Byrne and his daughter were going—in fact, he did not believe they were going to the sea-side at all—and he thought that he might perhaps find a luggage label, or something else, in the room that would reveal to him what he wanted to know.

One or two boxes, ready packed, were there, and on the table lay several loose labels, but, unfortunately for Pringle's purpose, they were still blank. Gliding quietly about the room, he next tried the different drawers and cupboards, hoping that in one or other of them he might find a clue of some kind to what he was so anxious to know, but all his searching proved of no avail. Suddenly he heard the street door open, and he had hardly time to get out of the room and round the corner of the next landing, before Miriam ran lightly up the stairs to fetch something that she had forgotten.

Later on in the evening, when Byrne and Miriam had got back home, Pringle sent Bakewell upstairs to ask at what time next morning they would like to have a cab in readiness.

"How long will it take to drive to Euston Square?" asked Miriam.

"A good half-hour, miss. Three-quarters, if you happen to meet with a block."

"At that rate an hour would be ample time. Will you kindly arrange to have a cab in readiness by nine o'clock?"

At five minutes past nine next morning, Mr. Byrne and his daughter, together with sundry boxes of luggage, drove away from Spur Alley in a four-wheeler for Euston Square. Three minutes later Pringle was following on their heels in a hansom. He had timed himself to arrive at the station within two minutes of those whom he was following. He alighted, and began to reconnoitre cautiously. It would not do to be seen by either father or daughter. Peeping round a corner of the entrance doors into the large hall, he there saw Miriam standing by the luggage, Byrne having in all probability gone to secure tickets. Pringle beckoned to a porter. "I'm from Scotland Yard," he whispered. "I want you to find out, without its being noticed, for what place those boxes are directed by which yonder young lady is standing."

"All right, sir—that's easily done," said the porter.

Three minutes later he came back to Pringle. "The boxes are labelled for Marhyddoc in North Wales," he said. Pringle put down the name of the place in his note-book, gave the man a shilling, and took the next omnibus back to the City.

But he did not leave the station till he caught a glimpse of Byrne as he stood at the refreshment counter waiting for his travelling flask to be filled. But the Peter Byrne whom he now saw was a very different person from the decrepid, deaf old invalid of Spur Alley. The long white locks, the black velvet skull cap, the hump on the left shoulder, and the feeble walk had all disappeared in the cab, as if by magic, leaving behind them a brisk, pleasant-looking gentleman of middle age, who was speaking with the young person that was waiting upon him, and who seemed to have no difficulty whatever in hearing her replies.

"I thought as much," said Pringle, with a knowing shake of the head. "It's no more than I expected. I've known all along that the old boy and his daughter were up to some private little game of their own. Well, so long as it means no good to Van Duren and no harm to me, I'm not the man to spoil their sport. But what will Van Duren say when he gets back home and finds his birds flown? It don't matter: I hope to have flown too by that time."

(*To be continued.*)

NOT ALONE.

THE storm was raging furiously,
The lightning flashes shone
On a tiny dainty bed, where lay
A little boy alone.

Alone in the midnight solitude,
He lay awake, and smiled,
And crossed his hands upon his breast
Amid the storm-cry wild.

His mother quailed at the tempest roar:
She sought her darling's bed:
"Awake and alone, and not afraid,
My brave wee man!" she said.

Then the little one opened wide his eyes:
"I'm awake, but not alone:
My Saviour, Jesus Christ, is near,
In the dark night, in the lightning clear
I see him always, mother dear,
In the deep thunder's tone."

Oh, for the faith of a little child
And oh, for a heart to see
The Saviour Christ mid strife and storm
And all life's mystery.

OUR LONDON WATER-CRESS SELLERS.

By Ellen Barlee.

WE have in the present day many missions of mercy—missions which, emanating in love to Christ, have established themselves in some of the darkest corners of our city's confines, and, acting there like beacon-lights amid the vast sea of misery by which they are surrounded, are daily instrumental in saving souls from ruin.

There are missions to the heathen, missions to the sick, missions to the fallen, etc.; and last, not least, *preventive missions*, whose object it is to forestall want; to remove the stumbling-blocks of sin and temptation from the feet of the unwary; to offer the hand of encouragement to the willing and friendless, and to preach the gospel of peace to those on whose ear the glad tidings of salvation have never yet fallen.

Amongst such *preventive missions*, that to the water-cress sellers and flower-girls of London deserves notice, for it labours amongst a class who may with truth be accepted as representing the very poorest of our street poor, and yet, withal, from the testimony of those who have now for years been closely associated with it, are most perseveringly industrious in their endeavours to earn an honest livelihood. As the familiar cry of "Water-cresses! Fine, fresh water-cresses! Who'll buy my fresh water-cresses!" falls on the ear; or as a bunch of early violets is offered for sale by some fragile-looking, ragged child, there are few, I fear, who give further thought to the vendor's condition, or to the very precarious subsistence which such a calling ensures.

It was from a card of invitation issued by the Secretary of the Water-cress Mission Society, to meet over 600 of these poor creatures at a tea-drinking, previous to the annual meeting in their behalf in the Agricultural Hall, Islington, that I first made the acquaintance of our London water-cress sellers en masse, as also that of the founder of the mission, Mr. Groom, whose Christian labours for their benefit will, I hope, meet with the sympathy they merit.

In the early spring, when water-cresses are abundant, it appears that the trade receives a great impetus from the number of destitute women and children who, having been in a semi-starving state all the winter, rush into this calling as the only available means of subsistence. At this season the number of cress sellers in London alone exceeds *one thousand;* whilst, as may be imagined, such a competition sadly diminishes individual gain.

To the uninitiated, the mere hawking about a basket of cress may

appear an easy, an almost idle employment; and doubtless, in one sense, it is the former, requiring as it does neither capital nor training of any kind to commence upon. A few pennyworth of water-cress and an old hamper-lid are not unfrequently the entire stock-in-trade wherewith the vendor makes her start in life.

The reverse of the picture would, however, soon be recognised, were one to follow, if but for a day, these girls from the commencement of their day's labour to its close.

First they must be up between four and five every morning: for the market opens at five a.m., and unless they be there early, all the best cresses will be gone. The weather is often so bitter that the water from the pumps, where the sellers wash their cresses, is so cold that it freezes on their fingers as they perform their task. This done, they must next walk mile upon mile, their throats husky with the continued crying of "Water-cress!" before they can earn their breakfast, and the same through the long day, wet or dry, damp and fatigue being too often their largest gain. If they indeed turn a sixpence over, they consider it a good day's work; but Mr. Groom assured us that fourpence was much nearer an average of their earnings.

As summer advances, and water-cresses are less plentiful, the vendors substitute flowers. These they alike have to furnish themselves with at the early markets, and tie up into bunches for sale. From February to October, what between water-cresses and flowers, the greater portion of the girls manage, it appears, to pick up a hand-to-mouth subsistence, though nothing can well be more deteriorating to their characters than their constant exposure to the street life which such a calling necessitates.

It is, however, as winter advances, that the real hardships of the cress vendors commence; for, as cress and flowers fail, there are but few saleable wares they can hawk, which come within their power to purchase.

It was during many years' observation of the habits of this class, at the time Mr. Groom was working in connection with a gospel mission in the neigbourhood of Farringdon Street Market, that his sympathy was drawn towards their sad position. He noticed the isolation of their life, for each girl had to thread the streets alone to dispose of her wares, and companionship would diminish her gains; their seven days' toil, the Sabbath being an unknown rest, and their greatest day of success. The absence of all Christian softening influences which the shelter of home secures; the early acquaintance and unblushing revelations of vices of every kind which street life engenders during the erratic nature of their work; seemed to cut them off as a class from every ordinary means of Christian teaching; and, in consequence, Mr. Groom determined to organize, if possible, a special mission in their behalf, which, by God's blessing on his efforts, has now, after six years of unremitting toil,

assumed features that entitle it to rank as one of the most useful preventive measures of the day.

A large portion of the water-cress vendors are children of a tender age, whose constitutions become much impaired by their exposure to cold and wet, whilst every infantine characteristic is soon lost sight of in these poor children's premature need to earn their own independence. The following extracts from the society's report will convey, better than any description I can give, a pathetic idea of the lives of these little ones. It was from the pen of a visitor to the mission, who thus writes the experience of a child of eight years of age he saw there :—

"On and off, I've been near a twelvemonth in the streets, and I'm just eight years old. The creases is so bad now that I haven't been out with 'em for three days. They're so cold, people won't buy 'em; for when I goes up to them, they says, 'They'll freeze our bellies.' Besides, in the market, they won't sell a ha'penny handful now—they're ris to a penny and tuppence. In summer there's lots; but I have to be down in Farringdon Market between four and five, or else I can't get any creases. Some of the saleswomen is very kind to us children, and some of them altogether spiteful. When we've bought a lot, we sits down on a doorstep and ties up the bunches. They must look biggish, or the people won't buy 'em. Some puffs them out as much as they'll go. We children never plays down at market, 'cos we're thinking of our living. I bears the cold—you must; it hurts our fingers to take hold of the creases, especially when we takes 'em to the pump to wash 'em. One day I took 1*s.* 6*d.*, and the creases cost 6*d.*, but it isn't often I get such luck as that. I oftener make 3*d.* or 4*d.* than 1*s.*, and then I'm at work crying 'Creases, four bunches a penny!' from six in morning to about ten. When I gets home I puts the room to rights; cleans the chairs, though there's only two to clean. I scrubs the floor—that's what I do three or four times a week. I don't have no dinner. Mother gives me two slices of bread-and-butter and a cup of tea for breakfast, and then I goes till tea and has the same. We has meat of a Sunday, and, of course, I should like it every day. Mother has just the same to eat as we has, but she takes more tea—three cups sometimes. Sometimes we has a game at honeypots in the court, but not often. I knows a good many games, but I don't play at 'em, 'cos going out with creases tires me. I never has no sweetstuff. I never had no doll, but I nurses little sister—she's only two years old. I'm a capital hand at bargaining—but only at buying creases. They can't take me in. If the women tries to give me a small handful of creases, I says, 'I ain't a-goin' to have that for a ha'porth,' and I go to the next baskets and so on all round. I can't read or write, but I knows how many pennies goes to a shilling, but I don't know how many ha'pence there is, though there's two to a penny, and four fardens goes to a penny. That's as much as

I wants to know for the markets. I puts in a club, and draws it out to buy clothes; it's better than spending it in sweetstuff for them that has a living to earn. It's like a child to care for sugar-sticks. I ain't a child, but I sha'n't be a woman till I'm twenty, but I'm past eight, I am."

Turning, however, from this sad picture of water-cress existence, it will be cheering to glance at some of the many schemes of utility which Mr. Groom has set on foot for the comfort and improvement of this community.

First, in order to gain an intimate knowledge of each individual vendor's position or need, a Scripture visitor to them has been appointed, whose duty it is to seek them out in their daily rounds, and invite them to repair in the evening to the Mission Hall, where they are met with words of Christian counsel and sympathy. Then there is an evening school for them to learn reading and writing; a Sunday School and a special Sunday afternoon service for such as can be induced to attend; a mother's class, and a girl's class, where they are encouraged to bring their clothes, and are taught to mend them; a clothing club and a district club, in which such pence as they can spare are carried for safety and interest; a soup-kitchen, where the women and girls can purchase, at cost price, good, warm soup, no slight boon to those whose occupation is a street one, and a children's dinner-table, from whence during the winter months hundreds of little water-cress sellers are fed and warmed.

All these labours of love are conducted, Mr. Groom informed us, by a voluntary band of Christian workers under his own supervision.

Beyond, however, the above-named springs of good which flow from the mission, there is another of a very practical and useful character, in which I was much interested—"The Emily Loan Fund," a scheme for helping the poor water-cress sellers, devised by Mr. Groom and supported by the kind liberality of the society's excellent president, the Earl of Shaftesbury, in memory of his late wife, the Countess of Shaftesbury, whose name it bears.

I have already noticed that, when winter draws near, the water-cress trade nearly ceases, and the vendors are reduced to the greatest straits to earn their bread. Justly realizing that in this fact lay the root of much of the destitution that fills our unions with able-bodied paupers, Lord Shaftesbury, who has, indeed, well earned his appellation of "The poor man's friend," placed in Mr. Groom's hands, in his late wife's name, the sum of £150, as a loan capital from which to replenish the cress-sellers' boards in winter, or to provide them with some other calling. A portion of this sum was at once applied by Mr. Groom in the purchase of the various apparatus—urns, cups, saucers, &c., needed to open coffee-stalls, fried-potato ovens, stewed eels, and other such favourite viands; these he lends to the borrowers

at a rental of from 1*s.* to 2*s.* a week, until their value is paid off, when they became the property of the purchaser, who is thus launched in a fair way of independence. These loans are, however, never made, except the borrower can find security among friends for the value entrusted; and the large number of poor who, since this fund has been started, have benefited by the loan, finding in each case the required security, speaks volumes both for the utility of the enterprise, and the honesty and respectability of the borrowers.

After the tea-drinking to which I have referred was over, the 600 cress-sellers were marched into another portion of the hall, where the annual meeting in their behalf was to be held, and was well attended by a large number of persons interested in the mission. The Earl of Shaftesbury had promised to preside. He arrived at last, though somewhat late, and was received with a burst of welcome, and the sound was strengthened into a prolonged cheer when his lordship, with one of those happy sallies which he so well knows how to adapt to his audience, apologised for his tardiness by saying "that it had been the House of Lords that had detained him from the House of Ladies, whom he was, however, glad to see in such numbers, and whose well-being was a source of heart interest to him." Later in his speech, the Earl referred with feeling to the gratification he felt that the "Emily Loan Fund" had proved so great a success; pointing out in encouraging language the sweets of independence as compared with that system of mere alms-begging and alms-receiving which must ever lower a person in their own self-respect.

In conversation with several of the women, it was most encouraging to find how those higher hopes and higher aims, which every earth-born soul may claim as their heritage in Jesus Christ, had evidently taken root in their hearts, not alone opening to them a new existence, but having the effect of inciting them to try and raise themselves in their temporal position and habits—hopes and aims which, save for the mission working in their midst, might never have pierced the dark cloud of spiritual ignorance which hung over their lives. Before the meeting ended, a hymn was sung in which all present took part; and as one gazed upon that sea of weather-bronzed and somewhat coarse-featured faces which were uplifted in this act of praise, and noticed the softened and in many cases unmistakably fervent expression thereon, the after-prayer of every such gazer's heart must surely have been, "God speed such missions of love, and God incline the heart of Christians of every degree to aid in their establishment and support by every means in their power.

*** Any further inquiry as to the Water-cress Sellers' Mission can be made direct to Mr. Groom, 8, Seckforde Street, Clerkenwell, E.C.

OUR WIDOW.

By Henry Kingsley.

IT is impossible to conceal from ourselves the fact that we should never in all probability have heard of Mrs. Wilson, save through her maiden name, had it not been for the overweening good nature of Miss Goliath. We are as happy now as we were before she came ; and, we think, on the whole, better. Affliction, when taken in a proper spirit, has its uses, and we think that we are better : we, on the other hand, are most perfectly certain that we are considerably wiser,

As George Eliot says, "Nature repairs her ravages," and we, with the assistance of human nature and the Rector, have had ours repaired for us. Now that we are in *status quo ante bellum*, we all think it right that the story of our sorrows should be told. No one of us is answerable for the following narrative ; though, of course the ostensible narrator will have to bear the blame of any shortcomings. Let us see what sort of a community we were before the Grand Disturbance Society in our place grouped itself round the church : a well-endowed edifice of great and singular beauty, left complete by the end of the twelfth century, and scarcely touched, save for necessary repairs, until it was restored by the neighbouring gentry and farmers, about ten years ago, in the most careful manner, and in the best style of art. There was room in it for the whole of the church-going population of the neighbouring town of Croxton, but our village population of 600, though excellent church-goers, represented a mere handful of peas in a large drum. Our Rector, who was, and we are happy to say is, the best rector in all England, lives in a rectory like a deanery at the end of the church-yard, with a walled garden, the like of which is seldom seen, in which he walks up and down composing those sermons, the publication of which, in an octavo form, have earned him such a world-wide reputation. Beyond his garden is his rookery, and beyond his rookery his glebe of a hundred and fifty acres, which he leases to his coachman and the parish clerk, who are recognised as farmers by the title of Nickson and Dodds.

The Rectory was once a priory, or something of that kind, and the last Prior Ambrose died in what is now the kitchen. A wretched antiquarian came and wrote us an account of our place in his book, wherein he denied this, and said that the Rectory only dated from 1560. Major Bung settled him in the county paper in such a way as prevented the wretched upstart from giving any reply whatever. The Major also wrote him a private letter of the most withering kind, to

which he sent no answer. He will think twice before he troubles us again.

Major Bung is the Rector's churchwarden, while Mr. Waters is the parish one. The Major's place is a very beautiful, low house, situated on a slight rise above the meadows, with the river, one of the finest trout streams in the world, winding nearly round it, and overshadowed by vast elms. His rookery begins where the Rector's ends, so that it is impossible to distinguish the birds. The Rector, who is no sportsman, for many years has formally requested the Major to be kind enough to shoot down as many of his, the Rector's, rooks, as he considers necessary. In the same way, and in the same voice, he has requested the Major to be so good as to take on himself the responsibility of the churchwardenship for another year. The Major has always received these requests as commands, and not only does his duty by the Rector in this respect, but kills his trout for him, and is very particular that no interloper shall come near that sainted man's water but himself.

We have in reality a small village street, but we never say so, because we consider streets to be vulgar. Some wretched Post Office official, some creature of Scudamore's, might come and number us, and Miss Goliath would never sleep another night in her house after that indignity had been offered to it. She is a very wakeful person; one night she took loo, and lost eighteen shillings, she did not sleep, she informed us, for a week. Her house is called Cliff Lodge, in consequence of there being a deserted quarry of chalk behind her grounds, which she insists is natural, in spite of being assured by Waters, pathetically, that his father worked in it thirty years ago. A cliff it is to her, as much as Shakespeare's Cliff at Dover. It was in the quarry that we nearly lost for ever the services of Major Bung. Just as we had finished whist one night, and the Major had pocketed his winnings, he discovered through the open window a suspicious light in the meadows far below, which, to his military eye, showed that some one was poaching the Rector's water. The party went on to the lawn, the Major, with his usual gallantry, heading the advance into the darkness. There was a struggle, a crash of breaking boughs, and immediately the Major was heard uttering the regimental language of those days apparently from the bowels of the earth. Light and assistance were at once procured, and he was discovered by the more adventurous of the party, searching among the stones for one pound, three shillings and sixpence, but otherwise unhurt. The three and sixpence was picked up the next morning, but the sovereign remains there to this day.

As Major Bung was father of the village, so Miss Goliath was its mother. We should have wept had anything happened to either of them. Miss Goliath is possessed of vast wealth; of that there is no doubt whatever: the fact has been disputed, but there is no doubt of it. She owns more than a quarter of a million in Spanish and Mexican

stock. We all thought for a very long time that she and Major Bung, being both unmarried, would have united their vast fortunes. Miss Goliath has only herself to thank for bringing that woman into the place. I say no more at present.

Mrs. Chopple lives with her husband next door to Miss Goliath, at the Cedars. She is an excellent woman among the poor; but her way of revoking after she has played her last trump causes continual anxiety to her partner. Mr. Chopple is seldom allowed to play whist; he is so dreadfully absurd; he plays an excellent scientific hand, but you can't trust him. We have seen him, when he held good paper, get trumps out, and as good as make spades trumps; but then he would begin to talk, and forget what spades *were* out. Neither of the Chopples are good card-players, which is a sad pity, because they are possessed of every other virtue. Mrs. Chopple manages her husband to that extent that she won't allow him to go to the tailor without her; and a nice figure she makes of him: Somes, our tailor, has lost no end of custom through her interference. Chopple is a fat man of fifty-six, and she insists on rigging him out like Lord Eustace Bellamy, our lord's youngest son, who is nineteen, and has just left Eton.

This brings me to our lord. We have one: a cabinet minister: and one who, old as he is, will rap it out soundly to any foreign power who dares to meddle with England. He comes to see us sometimes, and although we do not like his politics, we like him. He is a Whig: we are Conservatives. Under the good old rule of open voting, our little place went Conservative to a man, or nearly so. We put social pressure to bear on the Whigs which they could not resist. Under the ballot, however, my lord's nominee has it all his own way. Still we like my lord, in spite of his pestilent opinions. He is nothing to us, for he scarcely owns half the parish, and not an acre in the village. There is a model of him at Madame Tussaud's, in Baker Street, which Miss Goliath pronounces like. We never thought him worthy of what is generally considered the highest unofficial honour which Britain has to give. Yet there he is.

From my lord to my lord's lawyer is a natural transition. Mr. Denham is in good repute among us. As we cannot get my lord, we put up with his lawyer: though we very much doubt whether he is quite so familiar with the great statesman as he would have us believe. According to Denham, when he goes to the Castle he dines with the greatest of the land, and my lord treats him with the most familiar attention. One thing, however, is most remarkable: Major Bung was asked to dine at the Castle and sleep there. Denham was there also, and came back to the billiard-room of the Bellamy Arms the same night, talking about the people he had seen. Major Bung came back the next day, and we all went to see him. He told us of the fine people with whom he had dined, with the most unaffected good

humour, like the gentleman that he was. We asked him where Denham sat; the Major let out that Denham was not there at all. When we found out afterwards that Denham, one of ourselves, had only gone over on business, and had dined in the steward's room, we held our tongues. We never let Denham know that we knew the truth. We knew it, and he knew that we knew it; all the servants knew it; but we would have died sooner than confess it. Had Denham been a sensitive man we should have driven him wild by our sympathy. He was not sensitive. Major Bung fished the Rector's water harder than ever for him, and sent Denham all the trout; Denham thanked him just as if nothing was the matter.

Few communities in the world were more happy than we were; we resembled mostly that wonderful village described in "Elsie Venner," where everybody knew everybody else, and no one wanted anything: a village hard to find in America now, they say. We accepted the great county people as matters of course; few of us, except Major Bung and the Rector, were in county society; and few of us, in fact, could very well have afforded it. *They* told us all about it, and we were quite happy to hear all about it second-hand. We used to be asked to the grand croquet parties about twice in the summer, but we knew very few people, and did not very much care to do so: the downs which folded-in our little village were the boundary of the hopes of most of us. The younger ones went out into the world beyond the downs, and wrote letters back to us in our individual capacities, which were always read before a committee of the whole house. Sometimes we had a funeral, in which case every house was closed. Sometimes we had a wedding, and then we were as gay as if the Prince of Wales had been married, and always declared the bride to be the handsomest woman in England, after the Princess. We had a general and vague idea that the world outside our hills was going to the deuce, but we did not care much for that.

But our poor little paradise was rendered, for a time, a perfect inferno by Miss Goliath's puppy.

When her old dog wheezed himself to death at fifteen, she declared that she would never have another pet as long as she lived. Had she kept to that resolution, this history would never have been written. She, however, missed the dog. She said that when she woke in the night and did not hear it snoring, she could not get to sleep again. And besides, as a lonely woman, with no man-servant on the premises, she required some protection. She was bent on a new dog. The Major recommended a Scotch colley; she saw an advertisement in the *Field* of a fine one, and as she had to go up for her dividends, she determined to look at it.

Miss Goliath was an extremely resolute lady of five-foot-eight and thirty-five. She drew her dividends, and then went to look at the

puppy in Camden Town, in a street close beyond the railway arch. The puppy was a real beauty, and Miss Goliath bought him. The dog-dealer who sold him proposed to send him to his destination by train; but no, Miss Goliath determined to take him away with a chain and collar. She did so, holding the dog's chain with her right hand, while in her left she carried the little black bag containing her quarter's dividends. Some say that she has twelve hundred a year in the funds alone, but it is certain that since Hoxton's bank broke she keeps her own money in her house. Well, she had her quarter's dividends in a bag in one hand, and the chain of the colley puppy in the other, when she hailed the King's Cross tram-car with a view to getting to the Metropolitan Railway, and so home by Dalston Junction.

The dog got into the car with her perfectly well, and was put on the seat on the left-hand side, for the purpose of looking out at the window. The dog was apparently as good as gold, and looked out of window, gasping in the most lovely manner. The lady who sat next to Miss Goliath noticed the dog, and spoke to him kindly. She congratulated Miss Goliath on her acquisition: Miss Goliath replied that she was never deceived about dogs; and at this moment the conductor came for his fare. Then our troubles began in reality. Miss Goliath, to get at her purse, let go of her bag with one hand, and of the dog's chain with the other. The car was passing the veterinary college; the dog recognized the spot, and saw Professor Pritchard standing in front of it. The dog at once bolted to his dear old friend, and careered wildly around him. Miss Goliath paid her fare, stopped the car, and got out after her dog, *leaving the bag with her dividends in it behind her.* The strange lady took possession of that bag, and the conductor was none the wiser.

The dog, in the meantime, having kissed Professor Pritchard, "scoured away in long excursion" into the rear of the establishment. The kind young men who wait on the Professor caught Miss Goliath's dog, and rendered him to her. She was informed by the Professor that they knew the dog, that he had been treated there for distemper, and that his name was, in reality, "Rover." She departed in tow of her puppy down the road towards King's Cross. As she was under the railway arch in St. Pancras Road, she missed her bag.

There were nearly three hundred pounds in notes in it: she could afford the loss, but it was terrible. She saw the car in which she had travelled, coming back, and stopped it. She asked the conductor, and he could tell her nothing more than that the lady who had sat beside her had got out at King's Cross Metropolitan with a black bag in her hand. Miss Goliath went on in despair, and arrived before the station, in tow of her puppy.

The lady was there waiting for her. She was a pretty little lady, of whom we shall see more afterwards. She said to Miss Goliath, "I felt

sure that you would come on here after you missed your bag. I have waited for you, but I have lost my train." Our people most emphatically wish that she had caught it.

Miss Goliath made acquaintance with the lady who had done her such special service, and found her to be a very rich widow, who had been living for some time in good style in St. John's Wood, but who had got tired of the neighbourhood. Miss Goliath went to see her for a couple of days, and Mrs. Wilson duly returned the visit at our village. We were all charmed with her: she was really a very pretty, taking little body indeed. She liked us immensely, and as there was a furnished house vacant, and she required change of scene, she took that house and advertised her own to be let. She played and sang, her whist was admirable, and if she got a bad partner or bad cards, she lost with the most exquisite temper.

So two months passed, and everyone got to like her. She was great among the poor, sowing her money right and left broadcast: the poor people swear by her now. She was also very sound in Church matters, and very soon made friends with the Rector. We are very fond of decorating our church; it may be a mistake, but it is still a fact. On Easter-day after she came, all our poor little decorations of cowslips and daffodils were thrown into the shade; the chancel was filled with white azaleas from Paul's at Cheshunt, the gift of Mrs. Wilson.

On that same day it was obvious that an affair which the most sagacious of us had watched with the greatest interest was coming to a point. When the Rector had finished his most admirable sermon (he was Bampton Lecturer one year, and what he said was worth listening to), we as usual stood up until he got into the vestry. Immediately after, Major Bung stepped out of his pew, went up to that of Miss Goliath, and offered her his arm. To us it was as good as a declaration. It was high time that she should be settled, and, all said and done, he was not so young as he was. The two most popular people in the village had evidently made it up, and we began to think of what we should wear, and of who would be asked to the breakfast. Mrs. Wilson, beautifully dressed, followed the Major and Miss Goliath down the aisle, looking right and left in the most significant manner. She stumbled over something and gave a small shriek. Miss Goliath's puppy had for some time, and to the great confusion of the congregation, attempted to attend church. Our clerk, however, had always anticipated his wishes with a broom kept in hiding for the purpose. On this occasion, however, the dog got in, and, like a wise fellow, tripped up Mrs. Wilson.

It was perfectly evident that the matter between Major Bung and Miss Goliath was settled. Judge then of our astonishment when, a week afterwards—that is to say, the Tuesday after Easter week—the following scene took place at the vestry.

Mr. Waters, the parish churchwarden, rose to propose the usual

church-rate. He said that it ought to have been taken before, but the liberality of the Rector had been such, that it was really unnecessary. Yet they were to consider that it was not just to throw everything on the hands of their revered Rector. His income was large, but his heart was larger. The church, their own church, in which they had worshipped since youth, and around which they hoped to deposit their bones, had been, with the advice of Sir Gilbert Scott and Mr. Butterfield, two men of European reputation, his special care. The late Prince Consort had once seen the church, and His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, having examined the edifice on his way to Sandringham, had expressed himself much pleased. Little was wanting to crown that edifice: a rate of three-farthings in the pound for this year would do all that was necessary to supplement the public subscriptions. He called on his brother churchwarden to second his proposal for the rate of three-farthings in the pound.

Then the thunderbolt burst. Major Bung, the kindest and best of men, the father of the village, suddenly rose and demanded, in a voice choked by passion, what Mr. Waters had seen in his conduct to induce him in taking the unwarrantable liberty of which he had just been guilty. He would never second such an iniquitous rate. What had the Rector done with the money already subscribed? "Spent on the church? Fiddle! let the Rector prove it."

"Then, sir," said Mr. Chopple, a man we never thought capable of saying Bo! to a goose, "you accuse the Rector of a malversation of funds?"

"What the devil does that matter to you, sir?" said the Major. "Your father was a pork butcher."

"That is a lie, sir," said Chopple. "My father was in a larger way of business than yours." The present writer also intimated in the strongest terms that the Major had exceeded the limits of debate, and, in the case of Mr. Chopple, had said what was not true.

The Major rose and looked at us all. Then he steadily anathematised the church, the Rector, Mr. Chopple, and the present writer. Then he departed, and we were somewhat relieved; but only for a very short time. He had scarcely slammed the door after him, when Waters rose, and looking at the present writer with a baleful stare, said that he believed the present writer could explain the Major's conduct if he chose.

The present writer was so very much dumfoundered at this that he had nothing to say. He had been in France for two months, and he appealed to the Rector and Chopple to affirm that he was absolutely ignorant of the whole matter. They shook their heads, and said that he must make his story good; there was too much evidence against him.

Well, at all events, Chopple and the Rector were agreed in denounc-

ing the present writer about some unknown thing: they were friends on the general bouleversement. Not at all: the Rector rose and quietly informed Mr. Chopple that in future they must meet as strangers. The vestry then broke up, consisting at that time of the Rector, Chopple, Waters, and the chronicler.

After this memorable vestry, and the innumerable collateral squabbles to which it gave rise, we all left off speaking to one another. The only neutral person who acted the part of the late King Leopold was the Rev. Mr. Hoodle, the new curate: we all of us had confidence in him because we had entirely lost all confidence in one another. It now becomes necessary to say a few words about that gentleman.

He came to us much about the same time as the widow. He was a nice, handsome young man; a well-spoken young man; none of us ever had the wildest idea that he was a villain; innocent as we were in the ways of this most wicked world, we thought him an honest young fellow enough. However, it is not easy to judge from appearances. The present writer was never so much deceived as he was in the case of that young man. Yet he is bound to say that there is not the remotest proof against Mr. Hoodle. Looking at it in another way, there is nothing to prove aaginst the man; though on the first suspicion of the truth we all sent him to Coventry. To put the matter more clearly, we are perfectly certain that Mr. Hoodle was at the bottom of it all, and, next to that woman, the principally guilty party: *but we can't prove it.* The man, to this day, swears that he is entirely innocent.

Although we left off speaking we did not leave off writing. The only thing which enabled us to gain the clue to the truth, was the habit which we had, in common with most other small communities, of showing all confidential letters to one another; we always did that before we quarrelled; afterwards, confidential letters were handed about, but always through third parties, as freely as telegrams.

Everybody soon knew that everybody else had seen everybody's last confidential letter, but nobody confessed to that. After the first beginning of the grand quarrel, it is quite possible that letters were written with the view of being handed round and being read: before that it was not so. I instance the following letter from Major Bung to myself, now published for the first time.

"Sir,—At the vestry this morning, you stated that what I said was untrue. You surely never meant that. The laws of my country prevent my taking the old remedy against you. I can, of course, after what you have done, never speak to you again. Can you, as a man of honour, give any proof of your monstrous allegations against a lady whom I always conceived to be the soul of honour? I fear that you cannot do it.

"E. C. Bung, Major."

The writer wrote, mildly, to ask for an explanation about the latter part of the letter. It was returned without being opened.

The writer will give one more letter before he gives the general correspondence. It is a confidential letter from the Rector to the present writer.

"My dear Blank,—I am by no means an advocate for the confessional, in a Romish point of view, yet I do think that it is a good thing when a young man with the deadliest of the deadly sins in his heart, that of malice, should confess it to his religious adviser. Coming as you do habitually——"

We can go no further; the writer was simply told, by the man who had been a second father to him, that he was living in deadly sin, and had better keep from church at a certain time. It was horrible!

The present writer went to the Rector. He was received coldly. "I frankly confess, my dear Frederick," said the Rector, "that I am glad to see you. I christened you, and therefore I am glad to have you here to prove that you are not a villain."

The writer began at once by saying that it was totally impossible to continue the conversation in that style, and took up his hat. If the Rector had not lost his temper, affairs would never have gone the way they did. He turned on the writer, and said, "False boy, do you deny the authenticity of this?"

The writer looked at the letter which he handed him, put it in his pocket, and left the room. But not the house: the Rector seized him in the hall and overpowered him; after that he brought him back, and the chronicler and the Rector had an hour's conversation, parting in the most amicable manner.

The correspondence which followed among our people was nearly becoming the property of the public through a great lawsuit. We merely give such specimens of it as illustrate the story which we have to tell. It extended over two months.

Chopple to Bung.

"Sir,—I request a public recantation of your atrocious scandal. I demand the name of your informant, and should it not be at once given, you will receive a letter from my solicitor. My conduct, since the death of my brother, will bear the closest scrutiny, and I beg to assert that you are a calumniator."

Bung to Chopple.

"Sir,—I have sent your letter to my solicitors. You had certainly better consult your own."

Bung to Blank.

"Sir,—I am not to be put down by a conspiracy between yourself and the Rector, at this time of day. My solicitors will communicate with you."

Blank to Bung.

"Sir,—I shall direct my solicitors to communicate with you at once. Your language about me to Farmer Neeps is distinctly actionable."

Waters to Blank.

"Sir,—As I am informed that you said that on the last occasion when you assisted me in collecting the offertory that there was £4. 6*s*. 10*d*. in the plate, of which I only handed the Rector £3. 11*s*. 4*d*., I have communicated with my solicitors, from whom you will hear immediately."

We had now written to our solicitors all round, but they were represented by one single man, old Mr. Denham, of Carr and Denham, my lord's lawyers. Carr's widow had put his name on a tombstone ten years before, but it was still on the office window, and as sleeping partner she drew £400 a year from old Denham. We used to think at one time that she would become a partner with Denham in more ways than one: that is, that she would have married him; but they never came together, and quarrelled in separate houses. Denham had all our business, on which he would not have got very rich; but he had a great deal of other business which was more profitable. He got the main part of it from my lord's estate, and as he had nothing more to do than to collect rents, it is a wonder how well he got on. The resources of his office were severely taxed by receiving five letters from five friends and clients on the same day, ordering him to take actions each against the other. He was up to the mark, however: he wrote to us all round, in cool legal phraseology, of what was impending; in hopes, as he said afterwards, that we should see the absurdity of it.

We partially did. When we each went to give him instructions, and discovered that he was employed in the whole five cases, we took to abusing him for taking the wages of iniquity. The Major expressed himself so very strongly, that Denham sent him a letter threatening proceedings on his, Denham's, own account, for which we suppose he charged himself six-and-eightpence.

So matters stood for a time: but where was Miss Goliath? She had gone to London. On what grounds, or for what purpose? The truth soon leaked out: she had gone to her London solicitors, to bring an action for breach of promise of marriage against Major Bung.

When we found this to be the actual fact (as it was *not*, but that is no matter just now), we began to wish to speak to one another once more. The idea of such a scandal threw everything else into the shade. Denham was the first man who made the great proposal of our all meeting in the Rectory parlour. By degrees we came into it, and we met: with every man's hand holding documents. A crisis was approaching.

No human being spoke to anyone else; we bowed coldly. Denham; who was like the Bavarians in the late war, put forward to do the dirty

work; the man who had instructions to proceed against the whole company, for and in behalf of every member of it; Denham was dumb. The Rector opened the proceedings by remarking that he understood that we all had taken legal proceedings against one another, and that Mr. Denham had taken legal proceedings against Major Bung.

Then our tongues were untied. Major Bung stated very quietly that he had said more angry things lately than he should have time to repent of. He was very sorry; but when he found tried and trusted friends turned into calumnious scoundrels, what could he do?

This looked like a nice beginning for a reconciliation. We should all have been at sea again, but for Waters; he burst into tears, seized the Major's hand, and demanded to know what he had done that such terms should be applied to him.

"And to us," we echoed in chorus. And although we were all at deadly enmity we combined against the Major. The Rector and the writer had got the key to the whole position, but only the key: nothing more. We had got as much as that when the Rector and the writer quarrelled for a short time, but we had been utterly puzzled since. The story must explain itself. The reader undoubtedly guesses that Mrs. Wilson was the mischief-maker; but more remains behind.

"Major," said the Rector, "will you be so good as to let me see the letter which you hold in your hand?"

"So long as it never passes from your hands, I will, sir." And he handed it over.

"Is this true?" said the Rector.

"Yes," said the Major; "but no one except Waters ever knew the fact. Therefore he must be the traitor."

"Come," said Blank, stepping forward, "read that letter in the same handwriting. You have known me from my boyhood. Is that true?"

He read it. "Of course it is, Blank," he said. "But I thought it was only known to you, myself, and your late father."

"Then you must be the traitor," Blank answered, laughing.

"It is very curious," said the Major. "I will swear that I never mentioned the fact to any human being."

"It appears to me," said Chopple, "that there is a snake in the grass somewhere, and that we have all been deluded. Now we are all so comfortable together once more, never to divide again, I am sure, I will hand round a letter which I have received."

He gave us his contribution. It was not a very long one, but it was in the same handwriting, and, like the others, anonymous. No one, however, knew the handwriting, and the letters were all posted from London. We at once resolved ourselves into a committee of public safety. We very soon arrived at the following facts.

Each one of us had received an anonymous letter from London, in which something which we would desire to have forgotten was set out

at full length. We had lived as innocent lives as most men: but most men have done something that they wish forgotten. For example, Mr. Blank had done an extremely foolish thing, which prevented him, according to the laws of that time, from serving Her Majesty as an officer: under the influence of disappointed love, he had run away from school and enlisted in a dragoon regiment. That was all set forth, with numerous additions not very creditable to him, and which were perfectly untrue. The authority was given as Miss Goliath, and there were circumstances narrated which it was hard to believe that anyone else could have known. Blank was earnestly entreated by the anonymous writer to beware of her as a most artful and malicious woman.

So with the other letters. The Major had had a scandal, which had only been told to a select few and was never mentioned. In his case the wickedness was too brutal, because the affair, in which he was nearly blameless, had saddened his life and prevented his marrying. The unknown said that it had been told him by Miss Goliath and discussed by him and her. But the object of the letters was in all the same: to set us against Miss Goliath first, and against one another afterwards. We asked the Major where she was, and he replied, cheerfully, that she was in London. "I think that I may tell you all now," he continued, "that that lady and I have never been on anything but the best of terms." We crowded round him, congratulating him, a really happy group, for we were sincerely attached to them both: then we went on to a closer consultation. Who had done it? The chronicler had been one of the first persons attacked, as he knew, by the memorable vestry meeting, and he made, for reasons of his own, the bold suggestion that the person was no other than the fascinating widow, Mrs. Wilson; but he soon had to withdraw his opinion. There were innumerable details which were mentioned in the most familiar manner, with which she could not have become acquainted, some actually occurring before she could have been born; and we looked at one another once more with blank amazement, but entirely now without suspicion. The Major grew more confidential, and told us, what he had intended to conceal, namely, that Miss Goliath had been attached to him in a way which he would not characterize, but which had prevented his showing her the letter. The first object evidently was to set everyone against that lady and get her to leave the neighbourhood. The effect now was to make us all ready to perish in her defence. We all wondered what she was doing in London, and why she was not on the spot: it seemed so strange.

The chronicler met Mrs. Wilson out walking the next day, and she was as gay, artless, and charming as ever; he was entirely ashamed of his suspicions. She was extremely pleased; she had heard from dear Miss Goliath, and was going up to town to see her. She had heard of a tenant for her house, and was going up to meet him. She went away

that very afternoon in a fly with her portmanteau and hand-bag. She sent for the rest of her traps afterwards, but she never dared show her face in our village again. She had got a tenant in her London house with a vengeance: she had tried to outwit a longer-headed woman than herself, and had most signally failed.

Not one of the noodles of men had taken the trouble to look any further at the postmarks on these precious documents than to observe the word "London." Miss Goliath, it appears (she must now tell her own story), observed that they were all posted in the W. district: that was the first clue, but it was a very small one. She started to London on it, however, with her own designs in her head. She would probably have succeeded without any further assistance, but a certain circumstance occurred in the train which gave her further information of a startling nature.

Our village stationer, Mrs. Smith, had lately taken to stamping her envelopes on the edge: Miss Goliath, on examining the *second* of the two letters she had received, found the words "L. Smith, —— Hertfordshire," stamped on the edge of the envelope. The writer of the letter had, then, bought envelopes of Mrs. Smith, and was an inhabitant of our village. She made now no theory even to herself: she went straight to Mrs. Wilson's empty house.

She never said why, she never told us what gave her the first suspicion. It was, she afterwards allowed unwillingly, something which Mrs. Wilson let drop at our village. The chronicler suspects that Mrs. Wilson asked her one question too many. But Miss Goliath went to Mrs. Wilson's house and knocked at the door. She was known there, of course, and she asked the servant in charge to let her come in and sit down. She at once got leave to do so, and the servant was very glad to see her, for Miss Goliath was very free with her money.

"I want to write to your mistress," said Miss Goliath; "just give me pen and ink, will you, if you please?"

"Yes, ma'am," said the servant, "and I can post it for you, if you like. I post them every day about this time. Sometimes they come by post, and sometimes Mr. Hoodle brings them."

"Is Mr. Hoodle often here?" asked Miss Goliath.

"Pretty often, Miss," the woman said, "for a minute or two at a time; he calls for Mrs. Wilson's letters."

We have now stated our case against Hoodle; the reader must judge if he were innocent or guilty. We argue the point with slight temper even now.

"Are there any letters now lying here for Mrs. Wilson?"

"Yes, ma'am; there is one. If no one comes, I shall have to open it, and return the enclosure to Mrs. Wilson."

"Would you do so? I am writing to Mrs. Wilson myself, you see. I can advise her of it."

The woman produced the letter; it was directed in Mrs. Wilson's own hand to herself. When the servant opened it, it merely contained another enclosure, stamped, and directed to *Miss Goliath.* It was in the hand of the person who had caused us all this deadly trouble, utterly different from the real hand of Mrs. Wilson.

There was no doubt now as to the calumniator. "You see," said Miss Goliath, "that this letter is addressed to me. I had better open it: you will witness that I do so. Do you know the handwriting?"

"Yes," said the woman. "That is Mrs. Wilson's disguised hand; she often writes like that when she chooses. She is a merry lady, and when she was dancing in the old times, used to make great fun with the trick."

The letter which Miss Goliath opened was actionable, as regards Major Bung; but at least half the mystery was cleared up, and Miss Goliath was willing to wait for the rest. She wrote to Mrs. Wilson, begging her to come to town by a particular train, as she believed that she had found a tenant for her house.

Mrs. Wilson came accordingly. Miss Goliath met her at the door. In answer to Mrs. Wilson's caresses, Miss Goliath was more than cold. "Catherine," she said, "come and sit by me. Do you ever think of the next world?"

"Not very much," she said. "I do not know any more about it than you do."

"Do you ever think about this present?"

"Well, yes. Never about much else!" was Mrs. Wilson's reply.

"Did you," said Miss Goliath, severely, "write these two letters?" putting the first and second libel before her.

"Well," said Mrs. Wilson, bursting out laughing, "I expect I did. But what a cunning old girl you must be to have discovered it. I thought that none of you noodles would have ever found me out."

"Have you no sense of moral responsibility?" said Miss Goliath.

"About as much as you would have had if you had been born where I was, and brought up as I was. Come, I don't want any words; I have had words enough in my time; so you would yourself, had you lived where I did."

"Have you no sense of shame, woman?"

"I don't know. Yes, I think I have, for I am sorry I deceived you. The fact is that I wanted to marry that old Major myself, and so wished to get you out of the way. Do you see?"

"I see a depth of moral wickedness," said Miss Goliath.

"Exactly," said Mrs. Wilson. "And all that. I would have married that man, and I believe that I could have made him very comfortable. Now he will marry you, and, mark my words, he will be tired of you in a year; you are too old for him. He is a gentleman, and I took a fancy for him. It is all for the best, I suppose; I should

have been bored to death among you in three months. I shall dance again, I think."

"Dance!" said Miss Goliath.

"Yes, dance," said Mrs. Wilson. "I can dance as well as ever. Have you not found out that I am the great ballet dancer, Maritornes? That I married Mr. Wilson and am rich, and that my name is pretty well known in Europe? When I saw the old Major, I thought that I would try to be respectable—I mean humdrum: mind, my name is above all cavil—but you people were so silly with your little petty ways, that I made really more mischief than I ought to have done. That awful ass Blank (the chronicler) should have been spared, and the Rector also; the others deserved all they got. I suppose you will bring an action for libel against me."

"I certainly shall," said Miss Goliath.

"That will be great fun," said Mrs. Wilson: "but will you do yourself any good?"

"The laws of my country will protect me," said Miss Goliath.

"Fiddle!" said Mrs. Wilson. "They may punish me, but they can't protect you. I know far more than I have ever told."

"Woman," said Miss Goliath, "where did you learn it all?"

"I dislike betraying a confederate," said Mrs. Wilson. "Did you ever hear anything about your father and Lady Alice Bellamy?"

"Fiend!" said Miss Goliath. "My father is gone where you will never go, and the whole falsehood was buried in oblivion at his death."

"Only I could turn the whole scandal up to-morrow. You had better leave me alone," said Mrs. Wilson. "Now I will give you a bit of advice. Do not you virtuous ladies get into the habit of gossipping with virtuous and hypocritical old pauper women, who have been nurses and charwomen in your families, until in their superannuation they take to be pious. Everything which I found out about you all was told me by that sweet old Janet Deepworth, at the cost of, say, ten shillings. There is the whole mystery explained."

"But Hoodle?" said Miss Goliath.

"He was in love with me," she said. "Any woman of decent ability could make a gaby like that do what she chose. Now have a cup of tea before you go. You won't! Well, that is the first time you were ever disagreeable. Good-bye, if you will. Give my love to the Major, and tell him that I hope you will get on well together. Adieu, my dear."

When Miss Goliath came home, several of us met her at the station. She said, "Well, of all the ——" She did not say anything more, but took her Major's arm and walked off.

THE PRINCESS DE CONDE.

A Sketch from old Court Life in France.

IT was the evening of a ball at the Louvre. Charlotte de Montmorenci, the loveliest of all the fair dames and beautiful demoiselles of the brilliant court of Henri Quatre, stood before a polished mirror in her dressing-room, clasping a collar of diamonds and pearls round her fair throat. The lights from a silver sconce on the wall above her gleamed softly down on a lovely, arch face, splendid, passionate eyes, and luxuriant dark hair, gathered into a mass of rolls and curls on the top of the small, proud head. Her dress of silver tissue, slashed and trimmed with carnation-coloured taffeta, was magnificent. It was worn over a petticoat of carnation velvet, stiff with embroidery of silver and pearls, and the close-fitting bodice and puffed sleeves were sewn all over with the same pearl and silver trimming. The small standing ruff, open in front to show the graceful contour of the throat and neck, was stitched with seed-pearls and diamond sparks. Diamonds gleamed in the soft, rich hair and tiny, shell-like ears. A band of diamonds encircled the slender waist, and the gems in the jewelled collar in her hand were worth a king's ransom.

As the young lady stood before her mirror adjusting the collar, the brilliant face looked somewhat ruffled, the rosy lips pouted, and the slight figure, with all the girlish grace of seventeen, was drawn up with the stately dignity of a daughter of the illustrious house of Montmorenci.

The Duchess, a stately dame in ruby velvet and gold, stood before the wood fire watching her daughter somewhat anxiously. With her entrance, half an hour before, the tire-woman had been dismissed; but even that time had not sufficed to accomplish the purpose that brought her there. In truth it was an ungrateful errand, and one the haughty court lady had small inclination for: especially as it was very doubtful how her beautiful, high-spirited daughter, with no small portion of her mother's pride, would receive the proposal she had undertaken to place before her. The Duchess had not found the intelligence very easy to convey, and Mademoiselle de Montmorenci had not received it with the meek spirit of submission generally expected of young ladies in those days, when the disposal of their hands was the last thing they were consulted about or allowed to have a voice in.

"Break my engagement with the Maréchal de Bassompierre! You would never have me consent to such a proposal, mother. You would be the last to counsel so base a proceeding."

"I fear you have no choice, Charlotte," replied the Duchess. "It is the King's command."

"I wish the King would not interfere with what does not concern him!" replied Charlotte, angrily. "What reason may he give for this very kingly act of tyranny?"

"One that is very honourable to you, my child. He thinks your beauty and talents are worthy of a more illustrious alliance. He intends to marry you to his own kinsman—the young Prince de Condé."

"I am extremely obliged to his Majesty for his kind intentions. In good sooth, it is a somewhat hasty proceeding, even for the gallant knight of the white plume himself, who is not wont to be dilatory where a fair lady is concerned. And pray what may the Prince de Condé say to this unceremonious transfer of my affections from Monsieur de Bassompierre to himself?"

"The Prince de Condé has signified his willingness to obey the commands of the King."

"Vastly obliging of Monsieur de Condé, I am sure," replied Charlotte, sarcastically.

"Nay, Charlotte, you are ungrateful to speak lightly of so gracious a design on the part of the King; for, after his own infant sons, Condé is heir-presumptive to the throne of France. He is, besides, the last of a line of heroes, and is said to possess all their great and noble qualities. It is an alliance of which even a Montmorenci might be proud. Think of it, my daughter."

"I will think of no one but François de Bassompierre," replied Charlotte, resolutely. "What is the Prince de Condé to me, that I should break my troth to another for him?"

"Nothing at present, but much in the future, Charlotte," replied the Duchess. "Nay, do not look so indignant. I tell you the King's heart is so resolved upon this marriage, that the contract is already drawn up, and you will be required to sign it this evening at the Louvre."

"The King would never dare to carry matters with so high a hand," said the fair girl, indignantly. "I will not give up de Bassompierre at his bidding: it is an act of tyrannical cruelty to wish to separate us."

"Cruelty! Be reasonable, Charlotte, and talk not like a romantic waiting-maid. This is mere obstinacy on your part. You were not particularly in love with Monsieur de Bassompierre yesterday, and half inclined to give him up. He is considerably older than you, and though, I grant you, the handsomest man at court, the Prince de Condé is much better suited to you, both in years and position. His talents are undeniable, and his is no remote prospect of the royal crown."

"With all his great and noble qualities, he might chance to scorn an alliance concluded with such indecorous haste, and with an unwilling bride," replied Charlotte. "No, not to be Queen of France will I resign de Bassompierre!"

"But how if he has resigned you?" said the Duchess, quietly.

Charlotte started indignantly, and the heavy jewelled collar she was clasping and unclasping fell to the ground. It was true that she did not particularly care for the Maréchal, but her pride was touched. "Never!" said she, haughtily. "François de Bassompiere would never resign me. I would sooner believe him dead than faithless!"

"It is the truth, notwithstanding. The King signified that such was his pleasure, and he has resigned you."

"He would never act so basely. I know him too well to believe it."

"Ah! my dear child, your six months' experience shows you as little acquainted with courts and courtiers as when you left your convent. The Count de Bassompierre is too wise a man, believe me, to forfeit the King's regard, even for the sake of Charlotte de Montmorenci. He has cancelled his contract with you, and, by Henri's own wish, is now betrothed to Mademoiselle d'Aumale."

A dead silence fell on the luxurious little room for a few minutes. Then Mademoiselle de Montmorenci stooped and picked up the diamond collar, and turning to the mirror, adjusted it carefully. Opening a curiously carved casket on the toilet-table, she took out a pair of perfumed silken gloves, embroidered with seed-pearls. These she drew slowly and carefully on her small white hands. When the last tiny button was fastened, she turned to her mother, and, with a scornful ring in her voice, and a haughty gesture of the stately head, said:

"When is this marriage to take place?"

"In two months' time."

"Ah! I will sign the contract with the Prince de Condé to-night. I have but one stipulation to make: let my wedding be fixed for an earlier date than that of Mademoiselle d'Aumale. The haste doubtless is unseemly; the urgency of the case must be my excuse." Then, with a sudden change of tone from the haughty, scornful beauty to the bright, gay girl, she said, "Come, mother mine, we will to the ball. This recreant lover must not think we sigh over his faithlessness."

A murmur of suppressed admiration went round as, a little later on this memorable evening, the Duchesse de Montmorenci and her lovely daughter entered the glittering salons of the Louvre, and passed through the crowd of courtiers to offer their homage to their sovereign. The centre of a brilliant throng stood Henri Quatre. The gay and gallant hero of Arques and Ivry. The chivalrous lover of beautiful, unhappy Gabrielle d'Estrées. The husband of La Marguerite des Marguerites. The theme of many a poet; the favourite king of the French; accomplished, popular, beloved through the length and breadth of the land. Near him was seated the Queen, Marie de Medici, handsome, cold, and haughty, waiting with calm patience till the tide of affairs should bring her turn of power—a turn which came all too soon.

The wily Florentines, Concini and his wife, were behind her, and bending down to speak to her was a tall, pale youth, with melancholy face and deep dark eyes. It was the young Prince de Condé. At a short distance from the immediate circle was seated Henriette d'Entragues, Marquise de Verneuil, brilliant, witty, and unscrupulous. The grave Duc de Sully and the courtly, polite Duc de Mayenne stood together near the King, looking immense disapprobation at the fair and frail favourite. The Maréchal de Bassompierre and Mademoiselle d'Aumale were in attendance on the Queen.

As Charlotte de Montmorenci advanced with a graceful reverence, the King came forward, and taking her hand, greeted her with the flattering and seductive homage in which he was so well skilled. Then turning to the young Prince de Condé, he said, "Ah, mon cousin, were I but a bachelor, so fair a bride should not be yours. I must have done all that gallant knight may do to win her for myself. I am unwilling to confess how loth I am to bestow her upon another. I would I could lay my crown at her feet."

Condé bowed very gravely at this high-flown compliment to his bride-elect; and the King, dropping the tone of gallantry, which scarcely became his mature years and position, and assuming a more majestic mien, presented the young Prince to Charlotte in due form. He bowed again very gravely, darted a look of suspicious inquiry at the King, and then bent his dark, penetrating eyes on the fair girl who stood before him, as if he would read into her very soul.

The moment was an embarrassing one, but Mademoiselle de Montmorenci had tact and self-control equal to the occasion. With a deep obeisance to Condé, she suffered the King to put her hand into his, and to pronounce his wishes for their happiness in the approaching union, without betraying any of the secret dissatisfaction which she felt. Probably the reluctance and disgust; which, with all her pride and spirit, it was impossible to quite overcome; at being hurried into a marriage with a man she scarcely knew and had never spoken to, would have been more openly expressed but for the presence of her recreant lover and his intended bride. While they were spectators of the scene, her scorn and contempt prevented any show of unwillingness on her part to be visible.

King Henri turned and whispered a few words to the Queen; and then giving his hand to the Duchesse de Montmorenci, he led the way to another and more private apartment; followed by the Duke, the bride and bridegroom-elect, and the few courtiers who possessed the right to witness the betrothal ceremony.

As they passed silently through the long galleries, Charlotte ventured to steal a furtive glance at him whose destiny was so soon to be closely connected with her own. There was little to encourage her in the sternly-composed features of the young Prince. His face was intellec-

tual, but strikingly proud and reserved. His figure, scarcely formed as yet, still wanted the grace and courtly dignity so common to the time. The singularly beautiful eyes were the great redeeming point in his appearance. They were strikingly expressive, and looked as if they could be as eloquent in impassioned pleading as they were quick in observation. Any lady, however fair, might find it difficult to resist the owner of those eyes did he choose to exert their power. At this moment his face betrayed no feeling so much as passive indifference; his eyes, when they met hers, wore a grave, mournful expression, half censure, half pity. Even her beauty seemed to have produced no impression, and Charlotte, accustomed to the homage and flattery of the most brilliant court in Europe, thought with dismay of the contract she was about to enter into, apparently with the only man who had ever seemed indifferent to the spell of her loveliness. Was it too late to recede? Could she still draw back?

On entering the room set apart for the ceremony, she directed a look of piteous appeal to her parents, to implore their interference. But her mother was talking to the King, and her father returned her glance by one of stern admonition, which intimated that it was too late to retreat. The Duke and Duchess were in fact charmed with an alliance which offered to their only daughter no remote chance of being Queen of France, and would certainly exert all their authority to support the King's commands.

Amid profound silence the marriage contract was read by the notary. King Henri then advanced and affixed his name to the document in his double capacity of guardian to the young Prince, who was an orphan and a minor, and also as liege-lord and suzerain of the contracting parties. The signatures of the Duc and Duchesse de Montmorenci followed next, as guardians of the bride. In his hard, dry voice the notary summoned the next witness, Henri Louis Bourbon, Prince de Condé.

There was a pause. The illustrious bridegroom appeared irresolute, darted one of his keenest, most suspicious looks at the King, and then bent his eyes on the face of his beautiful, unwilling bride. Never had she looked so beautiful as at this moment, as she stood with averted face and downcast eyes, a vivid blush of mingled pride and shame coming and going in her fair cheek. Overpowered by conflicting emotions, the archness had vanished from her face, to be replaced by an expression of deeper feeling. Never had she looked so charming and unconscious as at this moment, when her destiny seemed hanging in the balance, which a chance expression of feature might turn either way. The stern, suspicious look faded from Henri de Condé's face as he gazed at her, and noted the embarrassment and agitation which lent so soft an expression to her face. Suddenly she raised the dark, appealing eyes to his, and a deep sigh escaped her lips.

Condé took her hand gently in his. "Mademoiselle de Montmorenci," said he, in a low voice, "if this contract is repugnant to you, if it compels you to do violence to your feelings, nothing shall induce me to sign it."

They were the first words he had ever spoken to her, and there was a deep and tender devotion in the tone of the low, rich voice that thrilled to her heart not less strangely than the expressive glance of his dark eyes. "I shall not dislike him so very much, after all," thought she. Nevertheless, instead of answering his considerate question with equal frankness, she replied, perversely, "I pray your pardon, Monsieur de Condé, I am not accustomed to allow my feelings to stand in the way of the King's commands."

Condé dropped her hand suddenly at this chilling answer to his first advances. Leaving her side, he took the offered pen, and, with an air of cold indifference, subscribed his name to the parchment.

"Mademoiselle de Montmorenci, your signature is necessary," said the King, turning to her. "I would mine were the one above it, instead of yonder shy, haughty stripling's," added he, so low that she alone could hear it.

"How if I refuse to sign at all?" replied she, equally low.

"Then you offer an unprovoked affront to one of the royal house and my kinsman," said the King, instantly dropping the light tone of gallantry, and assuming the dignity which so much better suited him. "As such, I, your sovereign, should resent it, and you afford a triumph to Monsieur de Bassompierre."

The allusion to the faithless lover recalled Charlotte's pride, and accomplished the King's design. She advanced to the table and signed her name, Charlotte Marguerite de Montmorenci, with the superb disdain and haughtiness of a young empress.

A few unimportant signatures being affixed, the King once more led the way to the larger salon. The Prince de Condé did not again approach his bride-elect, but Charlotte found a more devoted, if not more suitable companion in her admiring sovereign, and, unheeding the grave looks bestowed upon her by him to whom she had just plighted her troth, listened with pleased attention to seductive flattery, whispered into her ear by the gay and gallant Henri. At last, deeming the espionage of the dark, searching eyes as more impertinent than even his position as her fiancé warranted, "I care not for his disapprobation," thought she, petulantly. "His serene high and mightiness will find I am not to be coerced into submission by his censorious looks. He has not even paid me the formal compliment of asking my hand for the dance."

Condé was so disregardful of courtly etiquette that he suffered the whole evening to pass without again addressing his fair fiancée. And when Charlotte at length quitted the ball-room, it was with a sense of

deep resentment towards her negligent lover, which she took small pains to conceal.

"The Queen desires the attendance of Mademoiselle de Montmorenci in the south salon."

A month had elapsed since the signing of the marriage contract. A month of generally cold indifference or chilling reserve on the part of the Prince de Condé towards his lovely betrothed, and of alternate fits of reckless coquetry and repentance on the part of Mademoiselle de Montmorenci. She soon discovered that Condé could be, when he chose, brilliant, elegant, and even witty; but his attention seemed to be engrossed by anyone rather than herself. He seldom addressed her, and she was piqued into a haughty imitation of his reserve. The affianced lovers were not allowed private interviews, and a better understanding seemed unattainable; especially as Charlotte, with a perversity unaccountable even to herself, took every opportunity of wilfully misunderstanding and thwarting the one or two slight efforts Condé made to overcome the barrier of reserve betwixt them. By every means which a young and lovely woman can so well employ, she endeavoured to provoke him either into a quarrel or an acknowledgment of love. She succeeded in neither. He disdained to come to an open rupture with her, and though well convinced that he had ceased to regard her with indifference, she could obtain no proof of his regard in words. She sometimes caught his eyes fixed upon her with an intense expression of passionate feeling impossible to mistake; but no further acknowledgment followed; and, piqued and mortified by her failure where most she now wished to succeed, she commenced a course of reckless coquetry, little dreaming whither it was leading her.

It was the evening before the day fixed upon for the marriage. A gay and courtly crowd filled the salons of the Louvre. Foremost in beauty and wit, surrounded by a circle of admirers, and attended closely by the King, was the fair de Montmorenci. She had been trying the hazardous experiment of exciting the jealousy of the lover. She had succeeded only too well. The Prince de Condé quitted the room with so serious an expression of anger on his face, that already she repented her rash behaviour. "Ah," thought she, as she watched the door close upon him regretfully, "if he would but vouchsafe to me one token of affection, however small; if I could but once see him at my feet, how gladly would I renounce the homage of him of the white plume and all his court!"

The brilliant scene palled upon her. The honeyed flattery of the enamoured King had never before sounded so disagreeably suggestive. His words and looks seemed suddenly to have acquired a significance and meaning which she could not pretend to ignore, and which betokened a danger to herself of which she had never before conceived the faintest idea. A deep blush stole over her face as she thought of

the sudden breaking of her engagement to Monsieur de Bassompierre, and the hurried betrothal to Henri de Condé. What could be the King's designs in both cases? She was in the midst of these agitating reflections, when a page approached her as she sat for an instant alone, and repeated his message.

"The Queen desires your presence in the south salon, Mademoiselle."

Charlotte rose and followed the messenger, glad of the excuse from lingering any longer where such new and disagreeable ideas had been so suddenly presented to her.

There was no one in the south salon when she entered, but, a moment after, the heavy velvet curtains were drawn from the opposite doorway, and the Prince de Condé came in; his face calm, resolved, and stern, and showing no trace of the angry emotion with which he had quitted the salon de danse an hour before.

He advanced to where Charlotte stood, and addressed her in a low, deep voice.

"I must crave your pardon, Mademoiselle de Montmorenci, for summoning you on false premises. I could not hope that any wish of mine would induce you to pay prompt attention to it, so, with the Queen's permission, I have used her name to bring you here."

As he spoke he laid on the table a large parchment, which Charlotte immediately recognised as the contract of betrothal. In his other hand was a small parcel, neatly fastened in silken wrappings.

The sight of the contract aroused all Charlotte's hauteur. "I am not aware that I have ever slighted any expressed wish of yours, Monsieur de Condé," said she, haughtily. "In good sooth, it would have been difficult; since, had your requests been as scant as your words, it would have required no less a magician than the Lady Catherine de Medici's wizard to have guessed you had any at all."

Condé looked at her keenly as she uttered these taunting words. But though the hand that held the little parcel shook slightly, he did not interrupt her.

"May I ask why I am honoured by your commands this evening?" continued Charlotte, recklessly, Condé's impassive, stern face and the obnoxious contract inciting all her high spirit and pride to the point of rebellion.

"I do not command, I merely pray your answer to two questions," replied Condé, calmly. "There lies the contract which you signed with such visible reluctance that it will evidently be your pleasure to cancel it. An affirmative answer to both questions will procure you that pleasure."

"The questions, Monsieur?" said Charlotte, proudly.

He opened the little parcel, and drew out a silken, perfumed glove, embroidered with seed-pearls, which glove Charlotte recognised as one of the pair she had worn on the night of the betrothal.

"Is this glove yours, Mademoiselle de Montmorenci?" asked Condé, holding it out to her.

"Yes," was the brief reply.

He hesitated, as if loth to ask the second question.

"The exchange of love-tokens was not mentioned in our contract, I think, Monsieur de Condé," said Charlotte, sarcastically. "I am at a loss to know how it came into your possession."

"That is easily explained," rejoined he, contemptuously. "This packet was sent to me half an hour ago from the Marquise de Verneuil, with the assurance that it contained a gage d'amour given by you to the King. Is this true?"

Charlotte's eyes flashed, the blood rushed in torrents over neck, cheek, and brow, as, drawing herself up, she replied, haughtily, "I refuse to answer any questions reflecting on my honour, Monsieur de Condé."

"This is no moment for trifling, believe me," said he, earnestly; and a passionate look of hope stole into his eyes at her indignant words. "As your betrothed husband, your honour is in my keeping, and I must be told in explicit terms whether this statement be true or false."

"Since you can doubt me so far, the truth or untruth matters little. Your trust in me must indeed be small, since it could be shaken by a few words from Henriette d'Entragues," said Charlotte, haughtily.

"I had never heeded them but for your undisguised pleasure in the attentions of the King. Has not your own conduct justified me? Do you think, Mademoiselle de Montmorenci, a man of honour could look with indifference on Henri's admiration for his affianced bride, knowing, as I do, his motives for breaking off your first engagement?"

"You seem to be deep in King Henri's confidence, Monsieur, since even his motives are revealed to you."

"Probably you are the only person in the whole court to whom they are not perfectly plain," returned the Prince. "The Comte de Bassompierre has made no secret of the fact that the King separated you from him, because in his handsome favourite he feared a formidable rival to himself. Forgive my plain speaking: it is necessary. He betrothed you to me because he could not imagine that the 'plain, shy boy of Condé,' as he calls me, would be any impediment in his way. But not all his power, not even your influence, would have compelled me to sign that contract, had I known this wicked design at the time. Now, Mademoiselle de Montmorenci, before trusting you with my honour, can you wonder that I must know how that glove came into the hands of the King?"

Confused, ashamed, alarmed at this revelation, Charlotte stood before her offended lover, her eyes drooping, her head averted, hot blushes coming into her face, then fading into marble paleness as a glimpse of the peril she had so rashly courted flashed before her. A sense of suffocation oppressed her, a convulsive rising in her throat

threatened to choke her with hysterical emotion. Instinctively she put up her hands to hide her face, but the shame and agitation were too much to be borne. Losing in a moment all her false pride, all her foolish coquetry and resentment, she cast an imploring glance at Henri de Condé, burst into a flood of tears, and would have fallen half fainting to the floor, but for his arms, involuntarily extended to receive her.

Such an answer to his half-contemptuous reproaches was very different from what Condé expected. He was not prepared for manifestations of agitation and shame, where he had anticipated only pride and coldness; for indications of a warmer sentiment, where he expected only indifference and scorn. For the first time he suffered a gleam of hope to steal through his heart. Never before had he held his beautiful fiancée in his arms, and forgetting his anger and pride, forgetting his just cause for jealousy, forgetting everything save her exceeding beauty and helplessness, he pressed his lips passionately again and again on cheek and brow, calling her by every fond name of endearment, and imploring her to forgive him.

"Speak but one word," cried he. "Only tell me you love me, only tell me that odious accusation was false!—but one word, and I will trust you to the death."

"Trust me without, Henri," said Charlotte, softly, smiling through her tears.

For a moment he paused, looking steadily into the beautiful, blushing face, the lovely, radiant eyes that met his so shyly, yet without a shadow of guile. Then bending down he kissed her lips and said, earnestly, "I trust you, Charlotte."

Presently Charlotte took up her glove from the table.

"I only answered one of your questions," said she. "Have you no further curiosity, Henri?"

If Condé had any, he was too magnanimous to betray it. "Not so far as Mademoiselle de Montmorenci is concerned," said he.

"Ah! but you must have, for my credit's sake," said Charlotte. "I lost this glove the evening of our betrothal, and I was so vain as to think that he who had just pledged his faith to me, had stolen my glove. If King Henri took it, he had no warrant from me for the theft."

Condé took the glove and the fair hand that held it in his. "Ah! Charlotte, can you ever forgive my discourteous words, my ungentle suspicions?"

"Yes, Henri; for had you loved me less, you had been less jealous of my honour. We can afford to forgive our mutual misunderstandings, since with to-morrow will begin our mutual confidence and love."

The marriage of the Prince de Condé and Charlotte de Montmorenci was celebrated with gorgeous magnificence the next day in the cathedral of Notre Dame. The King himself gave the bride away, and the whole

court assembled to witness the ceremony. Her dress, we are told by the old chroniclers, though composed entirely of white, was so covered with jewels and rich embroidery, that the original fabric could not be seen, and she seemed one blaze of light. The bridegroom's attire was equally magnificent, being also of white, and sparkling with gems.

But the sequel to this romantic marriage was perhaps the greatest romance of all. After a few days spent in wedding festivities, the Prince and Princess de Condé retired to their château of Enghein, in Lorraine.

A month or two having elapsed without any sign of their return to the court, the King sent an express, commanding their immediate presence. The astonishment of king, courtiers, and the lively Parisian world may be imagined, when it was discovered that the result of this command was the immediate elopement of the illustrious bride and bridegroom. The lively Parisians were in a state of vivacious consternation. Such an event had never occurred before, as a man running away with his own wife; and the astonishment increased when it transpired that the Prince and Princess had departed from their castle of Enghein in the early morning, disguised in the dresses of a peasant and his wife. The King's rage knew no bounds. He gave orders for an immediate pursuit, but the fugitives had crossed the frontier before their route was discovered, and Philip III. afforded them a refuge in his Flemish dominions.

On that monarch's refusal to give up his illustrious guests, the enamoured King declared war against him; but in the midst of his preparations he was struck down by the hand of Ravaillac the assassin. After his death the voluntary exiles ventured to return to France.

Charlotte de Condé lived to verify her husband's noble confidence, and the splendid talents and illustrious qualities of Henri de Condé have obtained for him so high a place in the history of that brilliant period, that his renown is only surpassed by that of his son, the "Great Condé," who in after years, together with his sister, the beautiful Duchesse de Longueville, played so important a part in French history.

IRISH IDIOSYNCRASIES.

By Narissa Rosavo, Author of "Polly."

THE almost universal diffusion of at least a measure of education throughout the kingdom should, by this time, as we would think, have worked a revolution in the minds and manners even of the Irish peasantry, but such is not the case. The children of the present generation attend school regularly; their immediate predecessors have shared similar advantages; yet still each household clings to its superstitious lore, and adheres to its ancient code of customs.

I can, however, at this moment, recall to mind one way in which these Celts are now beginning to depart from their old habits; and, unfortunately, in this, the lovers of the picturesque and weirdly wild have cause to regret the change. The graceful long cloak, made of the finest black cloth, and having its hood lined with rich satin, which formed so becoming a national female costume; and the possession of which was formerly the principal object of ambition of every growing girl; is now seldom worn by the young, who have discarded its use in favour of flimsy finery. They have no idea of how much they lose by so doing, but if they had they would not care. Gaudy, artificial flowers and streaming ribbons are "the rage," at present, amongst their kind. Beautiful faces; and there are many of these to be seen in Ireland; looked doubly attractive peeping out from under their sombre, handsome coverings, and the artistic folds in which these cloaks hung always gave a certain air of modest dignity and respectability to the wearers.

With the long black cloaks of the Irishwomen the habit of "keening" at Celtic funerals is also going out of fashion. This custom was formerly so much in vogue that persons who had a talent in that way learned the art of lamenting quite as a matter of business. It was a sort of female profession, and good "keeners" were continually hired to attend and give effect at burials. Now the sad procession very often approaches the graveyard in silence: the next of kin driving in the cart which bears the coffin: the rest arriving, some on foot, many on horseback, the women riding on pillions behind the men, in primitive fashion.

The elderly couples make a picturesque appearance. The old men wear knee-breeches, swallow-tailed coats, and high hats; while their wives are enveloped in the cloaks, upon the disuse of which, by the young, I have been lamenting. The jogging motion of the heavy steeds causes the large hoods to slip down on the wearers' shoulders.

Thus the fresh-coloured, cheery, weather-worn faces are exposed to view. A white-frilled cap is always worn on the head by these old dames, and over this a gay-coloured small square shawl of woollen stuff is invariably put on, and tied down in a large loose knot under the chin.

The pedestrians are remarkable for one peculiarity. The women all walk well and gracefully, while the men slouch along with a lazy, awkward gait. I have often considered as to what can occasion this difference, and can only conclude that the superior bearing of the female portion of the community results from the necessity which exists that they should hold themselves erect when carrying burdens upon their heads, as it is their custom to do. A growing lass will take a considerable walk with a jaunty, dainty air, perhaps singing as she goes, while she supports and balances in this position a large pail of milk or water, which she could not lift, unaided, in her arms; and I have known a girl under twenty habitually carry on her head, when engaged in laundry work, an enormous basket containing a weight of folded linen which few men would relish being constrained to bear upon their shoulders for a dozen yards.

The Irish nature is so excitable that where grief is felt at all it is generally exhibited with vehemence. When a death has occurred in a family, it is often, as one poor woman said, "every mornin' a sittin' up, an' a clappin', an' a screeching," but as a rule there is more bonhomie and sleepiness than sorrow displayed at funerals. The indifferent laugh and talk: the real mourners are either stupefied with weeping or have drowned their trouble for the time with strong drink. All are more or less worn out by keeping the festival of the recent wake. I call the long-sustained vigil by its right name. I honestly believe that a death affords far more enjoyment to the neighbours of the deceased than a wedding could give; partly, of course, because the pleasuring is so much more prolonged in the former than in the latter case.

Romanists and Protestants throng alike to the house of mourning. They eat and drink, smoke and talk, to their hearts' content, at the expense of the friends of the departed, who frequently lavish their all in giving what they call "a decent burying," and who would far rather consent to turn out of doors as beggars, when the entertainment is over, than be obliged to stint the company in any way while it lasts. The peasants speak with horror of the inhumanity of the manner in which the upper classes, as they consider, treat their dead. They would one and all break their hearts with weeping and lamenting if they had reason to imagine that they themselves should be shut up alone in a dark room, so soon as the breath had left them. They think the churchyard is a natural and by no means a solitary place to be laid and left in; but, until that resting-place is found, they trust to the kindness of their friends that their bodies shall never, for one instant, be

permitted to remain in gloomy loneliness; and, in the meantime, they honestly and honourably do to others as they would be done by.

They think much of how they and all belonging to them will look when dead. A beautiful and well-dressed "corp" is, by them, considered the most interesting of all spectacles. They very often save up money for years, in order, with it, to purchase a suit of clothes, which they lay aside carefully for use at the last scene of earthly display in which they are to take part. I have known a woman fall into enthusiastic admiration over a piece of stuff suitable for a gown or apron, because, as she said, "it would look so handsome on the table."

It is also considered a matter of the utmost importance that the dead should lie with their limbs extended in an attitude of calm repose. To secure this, treatment which we should call brutal is sometimes resorted to by the dying person's attendants. Readers may find it hard to believe that a peasant woman famed for turning out fine corpses could boast of having sat upon a patient's legs, to hinder them from becoming distorted, for days before the poor soul left the suffering body; and yet this is nevertheless a fact. Protestants share this weak regard for appearances equally with the Romanists. The ignorance as well as the obstinate prejudice displayed by the lower class of Irish, even where better things, in the way of some small enlightenment might reasonably be looked for, is often surprising, and even ludicrous.

A respectable girl, a member of the Church of Ireland, was dying of decline. When the end was thought to be drawing near, a messenger was sent with a request for the loan of a volume of "comfortable hymns," by the reading of which the patient's last days might be soothed. I called at the house and saw at once that death was fast approaching. The poor sufferer was evidently much distressed about something. It was explained to me that she would insist on keeping her knees up in the bed. She was continually urging her attendants to put a pillow or some kind of support under them, to enable her to do this, saying that she felt so much more easy in this attitude than when lying at full length. Her mother and aunt, however, not only declined to encourage the fancy, but even almost refused to allow her to draw her feet thus up; telling her, and me, that if they permitted her to do as she wished, she would look "a most terrible figure when dead." In fact, they plainly declared they would be ashamed of her, as her limbs would inevitably contract, and this would destroy her appearance "on the table."

I tried in vain to convince these cruel and yet really loving sick-nurses that the present comfort and relief of their patient was the great and important point. But the Irish are peculiarly unpersuadable; all the more so because they almost invariably agree, by word of mouth, with each proposition as it is stated by a superior; their minds, the while, remaining unshaken. They are even quite ready to echo and

appear convinced of the truth of two exactly opposite remarks, made one after the other. In matters indifferent to them, however, this can hardly be called insincerity; it is rather the result of the virtue of politeness carried to excess. Paddy is the most civil and good-natured poor fellow in the world, and he cannot bear to disappoint anyone.

All interference with the dead by careless or indifferent hands is held in horror by the Irish. For this reason most of them have a great objection to hospitals, infirmaries, and workhouses. Dire necessity, indeed, alone drives the poor into these last-named refuges, the inmates of which sometimes use these establishments as hotels, sheltering them in wet and stormy weather, and coming out during fine seasons to beg about the country. Sick persons often prefer to endure their sufferings at home, without alleviation, and their relations like to keep them near, rather than run the risk of giving the doctors and surgeons opportunities of holding post-mortem examinations where death results. When sudden deaths occur, necessitating inquiry into their cause, the "crowner," when he "goes away on an insect," is regarded with anything but esteem or respect. The peasants sometimes try to cheat him by hurrying on the wake and funeral, and then grumble greatly at finding that this avails them nothing, for of course he causes the coffin to be exhumed; thus giving the relatives "the trouble, entirely, of planting the corp over again," as a man lamented angrily of late.

This "planting of the corp" is almost always effected without the aid of any "Sogarth," or priest. Unless the relations of the deceased are wealthy, and can afford to pay large sums of money to secure clerical attendance, they dispense with any religious ceremonies at their funerals. The greater number of the mourners disperse, as soon as the graveyard is reached, and seek out their separate family burial-places, where they kneel down, and offer up prayers for the souls of their dead friends. If two melancholy processions are so unlucky as to reach their destination at one and the same moment, a quarrel is likely to be the result, for each party becomes immediately intent upon being the first to inter the coffin under their charge. The reason of this is that, according to popular superstition, the soul of the corp planted last will be obliged, for a long time, to employ itself in drawing water, in Purgatory, for the benefit of its more fortunate neighbour who was buried first. Another fertile source of dispute, at funerals, is the difficulty there is about opening one grave in the overcrowded churchyards without infringing upon the rights of another. There is nothing that an Irishman is inclined to guard more jealously than his last home.

When the mourners return home it is believed to be of great benefit to the deceased if one of the next of kin puts on and wears a suit of clothes in memory of him or her. Articles of attire are sometimes bought new for this purpose. The wearer, while thus commemorating

the dead, is bound to be circumspect in his conduct, and must endeavour to keep sober. I have known a young man, so circumstanced, make a long circuit, when going a journey, in order to avoid passing a public-house, lest he should be overcome by temptation.

It might be supposed that their belief in Purgatory would have the effect of making the ignorant Romanists look forward with much dread and anxiety to death, but they seldom display such feelings. It was apropos to some remark of this kind that a shrewd observer coolly said, that Protestants have more cause to await the hereafter with alarm. "They go farther and fare worse." The Irish peasant is, in fact, quite philosophic when discussing his own departure, or that of a relative.

There are very many strange superstitions afloat about the last and most important act of life, namely, the yielding up of it. If any feathers plucked from a wild bird make a part of the bed upon which a sufferer lies, some of the Irish peasants believe that the soul cannot escape from the body. I was gravely informed myself of this fact. Then there are lucky and unlucky times in which to die. For instance, we had a man-servant who held that any person departing this life within twelve days of Christmas, either way, was sure of eternal salvation. An old female retainer put her chief trust, it would seem, in being made, at the last moment, to lay her hand upon the dress belonging to some order of which she was a member. Another kindly Romanist was so fortunate as to possess a small piece of a wax candle, which had been blessed by the Pope. She believed that if this were burning by her, while she was in the act of expiring, her salvation was secure, and yet, with noble generosity, she lessened her own chance, by cutting off a piece of the precious taper for the benefit of her Protestant mistress, whom she loved, and for whose future she was in dread.

The old theory of transmigration of souls has also still a little hold, it would appear, in Ireland, as I have heard a woman assert that it was very sinful and impious to kill crickets, the spirits of the dead being in them. The advent to any house of these troublesome insects, immortalised by Dickens, is considered a very important affair, as the peasants believe they bring with them, to the inhabitants, either great good fortune, or terrible ill-luck.

The Irish poor are very poor, and endure many hardships, even though they keep a merry heart through all; but they do not often seem envious of their richer brethren. A life spent in luxurious idleness is sometimes called "having Christmas every day," and those who are continually stinted can scarcely comprehend how any grief can touch persons so situated. "'Tis a wonder now that the great people dies at all, at all, only I suppose 'tis the way they has the death in 'em," I heard a girl say once, in a meditative manner. The truth is, however, that the weather-beaten peasant is far more tenacious of life, generally, than the wealthy gentleman. Cases of extraordinary longevity, coupled

with hearty health and a sturdy enjoyment of existence, continually come before one's notice in country districts. Old men and women rarely know their own age. It is often a matter of offence to suppose them anything but young. "Up to forty," is the answer sometimes given by an ancient individual who is asked the number of his years, although, at the same time, he may be very near his allotted threescore and ten.

It is very probable that the use of the Celtic tongue will eventually die out. It is by no means so much in vogue with the rising generation as it was with the former. There are but few persons now, even amongst the old, who really "have no English," as the phrase goes; although many will pretend that this is the case, for purposes of their own. I believe, also, that the peasants would by no means wish their superiors to learn their speech. Nevertheless, they will express approval and admiration of any efforts made in this direction. Both Protestants and Romanists mutilate and distort the Saxon language in the most wonderful manner. They are as fond of long and difficult-sounding words as the negroes are said to be. They are even ingenious enough to mount polysyllabic terms, on the spur of the moment, when memory fails to bring forth any compound sufficiently startling. "Oh, sir, you gave us a very fine allegation to day," a respectable man said to his clergyman once. Now, if the time had not been immediately after morning service, there might have been some difficulty in discovering that the subject of commendation was a sermon.

A maid-servant, on one occasion, angrily called a troublesome child "the most ecclesiastical boy she had ever seen in her life," as the greatest term of reproach she could think of, and the same woman described a Fenian gathering as "a wonderful triangle of people." Then, when one of the gentry was ill in a country neighbourhood, there were many inquiries made as to whether he would be likely "to intercede," meaning were there hopes for his recovery. A dispensary becomes an "expensary," the excise service "the outside." To expect is to "inspect," and vice versâ. A cypress-tree is a "cypher," a surplice a "cypress," an inn "an end," and so on, ad infinitum.

The staple malady and cause of death in Ireland is a pain or stitch in the heart; but the peasants also suffer occasionally from "a great impression," and a "fluency on the chest."

The most grateful heart can find no richer or more elegant mode of expressing thankfulness for some favour done than to wish the patron "a blanket of glory in Heaven."

There is a great deal of infidelity sometimes to be met with amongst the lower classes in Ireland, and, on the other hand, there exists much genuine simple and rightly-directed faith and reverence, even amongst the most humble and illiterate. The Lord is spoken of with bated breath, and in tones of love that Protestants would do well to imitate.

An oleograph copy of a great picture representing the Saviour crowned with thorns was recently exhibited in a shop-window. A crowd of admirers gathered round it. Presently an old market-woman came down the street. Her eye was caught at once, and she remained rivetted to the spot upon which she stood. Tears rolled down her cheeks. She swayed her body backwards and forwards, as a person in great grief is wont to do, and she unconsciously set up a low wail or keen of sorrow for the sufferings of her Master, whom she thus saw represented. Her genuine feeling was most touching and instructive to behold.

"UT MIGRATURUS HABITA."

"Ut Migraturus Habita"
Is my song,
Though the days be short and sunny,
Dark or long;
'Tis the shine and shade together
Makes one strong.

"Ut Migraturus Habita"
Is my prayer,
When the world smiles brightly on me,
Or dull care
Hides from eyes that wait in patience
All things fair.

"Ut Migraturus Habita!"
For our eyes
Soon will see the shores eternal,
Which arise
Round the country we migrate to—
Paradise.

A. E. G.

PARKWATER.

By the Author of "East Lynne."

CHAPTER XVIII.

AT HOME.

MRS. LYVETT was at home alone. Her husband had gone out to dinner that evening, her daughters were at their brother James's. She sat at the drawing-room window in the twilight, looking rather abstractedly down on the lighted square below. Some entertainment appeared to be taking place at one of the houses close by, for the carriages were bowling up quickly.

A small, pale gentlewoman, Mrs. Lyvett looked younger than her years: she had been taken more than once for her big son James's sister. She wore a cool muslin gown, its loose sleeves falling from her slender wrist as her right hand was raised to support her cheek, which pushed back her light hair.

In her blue eyes there was quite a touching look of sadness, and she sighed repeatedly. For the past two or three weeks her musings had been all sad. Of all her children, boys and girls, the youngest, Frederick, had been the dearest to her; she had fondly believed him the one most implicity obedient and dutiful: and yet he had gone in direct opposition to her, to his father, to them all, and made that low marriage! It came upon her as a blow; and had left her with a perpetual heartache.

It was not so much the unsuitability of the connection for Frederick that distressed her; it was the girl herself. Had Sophia May been everything that was desirable, why, the fond mother mentally whispered, they would have overlooked her birth and rearing. At least, *she* would. Yes, and she believed that her husband would also in time. In time. But from all that Mrs. Lyvett had heard of Sophia May, she judged her to be eminently unsuitable to be the wife of an unsuspicious, honourable young man. She had never seen Sophia May: but she had heard of her from her husband and Mr. Castlerosse and James. She knew of the ridiculously absurd way in which she had been reared, of her airs and graces, and of the concocted letters and recommendations by which she had obtained entrance to Lady Tennygal's household, as governess, and of her being turned from thence on the discovery of the fraud. All this (Mrs. Lyvett knew of nothing worse) was sufficient to render her the kind of woman especially to be avoided

as a wife. But Frederick had married her; and Mrs. Lyvett felt for him to her heart's core. It seemed to her that the girl was not calculated to make him happy, and that he would probably live a whole life of repentance—and these things try a mother. Mrs. Lyvett was feeling it all very especially and bitterly this evening: she knew not why. Sigh after sigh burst from her.

"There's an old saying," she murmured, "and how true it is!—When our children are young they tread upon our toes, but when they get older they tread upon our hearts. Ah me! Will my heart ever be light again?"

A fortnight before, when Mrs. Lyvett's grief was fresh upon her, a lady who had been the companion of her girlhood, and who was about her own age, came to spend the day with her. It was a Miss Champion. Seated together in confidential chat, their minds had opened to one another as they had never opened before; and Mrs. Lyvett, her head aching and her eyes dropping tears for her misguided son's sake, spoke freely.

"Lots are more equally balanced in this world than we suspect, Fanny," she observed. "You, I know, have envied me my married life, the great blessing, as you have looked upon it, arising from the companionship of my husband and children. You have secretly rebelled—and bear with me, my dear friend, while I say it—at your own unwedded lot, almost questioning Heaven's judgment in decreeing it. But which fate is the happier, think you, when children bring these dreadful sorrows upon their parents? Oh, Fanny, believe me! many a poor wife, smarting under her sea of trouble, would be thankful to that same Heaven never to have had a husband, to have borne children. She envies you single women then, and wishes with her whole heart that she could be as you are. Yes; be assured, Fanny, that there is compensation everywhere; that our destinies are pretty exactly equalized. If you are debarred from this more active life of matrimony, its advantages and pleasures, if you like to call them such, you are free from its troubles and its carking cares."

If Mrs. Lyvett could say that—and feel its truth—a fortnight before, when the comparatively light trouble of Frederick's marriage was alone upon her, how much more earnestly and painfully would she soon have cause to say it now!

A servant came into the room, and she turned her head. "What is it, Thompson?"

"I was going to light the gas, ma'am."

"Let it be at present. My head aches."

So the man shut the door, and left her alone in the twilight as before. Amid the clash of carriages dashing up to the neighbouring house, she did not hear the quiet wheels of a slow cab, approaching hers. The evening star was beginning to twinkle in the western sky.

Had Thompson come back? Mrs. Lyvett turned quickly to look, for the door had opened again. She could not see very well in the dusk.

"Why, Frederick! Is it you?"

It was he, but he did not answer the question. Shutting the door, he came forward in silence.

That all the particulars of the arrest just made—for it was the same ill-fated evening told of when the last chapter broke off—would be in the newspapers on the morrow morning, together with the names in full, and go circulating around the length and breadth of London, Frederick Lyvett knew quite well. Among other people, that they would reach, were his own family: his father, mother, brother, and sisters. Amid all the terrible anguish that the affair was already costing him, this immediate fact held no light share.

After parting with his unhappy wife when the doors of the place of detention were securely closed on her for the night, he had a long conversation with the detective officer, Smith. That individual gave him the details of the affair, so far as they had come to his knowledge, more fully than had been given him before; and not a shade of doubt could or did rest on Frederick Lyvett of his wife's guilt. The examination was fixed for the following day at Marylebone police-court; when she would be committed for trial. As the officer observed, they had the whole facts before them, and there would be no need of a remand. The coroner's inquest was also to be held on the morrow.

Mr. Smith left him standing in the street—for they had just paced up and down the pavement while they talked. Frederick Lyvett lifted his hand to his bewildered head, and strove to think what next to do, where next to go. The recollection of his father and mother flashed over him. Obviously, his present duty was to break it to them; so that the morning newspapers might not be the first to inflict the shock.

But oh, what a task it was; what a task! No living being would ever know how he recoiled from it. His mother! his dear, ever-loving mother. Would to Heaven—he said it as he stood, lifting his hands in bitter anguish—that he had died before he had brought this disgrace upon her and hers!

But it must be done. That duty at least lay imperatively upon him. He stepped into a passing cab, and directed it to the home dwelling-house.

"Is my father at home?" he asked of Thompson, when he arrived there.

"No, sir. There's nobody at home but my mistress. The young ladies are out this evening."

"Will my father be in soon, do you know? Where's he gone?"

"He is dining at Mr. Castlerosse's, sir," replied the man. And the

answer was a kind of checkmate to Frederick's purpose. For sometimes, when the two partners dined together, they sat very late, talking of business. After all, he should be obliged to make the disclosure to his mother: Mr. Lyvett might not be home on this side midnight.

"My mother is alone, you say, Thompson?"

"Yes, sir; she's in the drawing-room, with a headache. I went up just now to light the gas, but she told me to leave it alone for a bit."

Passing upstairs to the drawing-room, he entered and closed the door. As he went forward, Mrs. Lyvett held out her hand. He took it in silence, drew a chair close to her, and sat down, retaining the slender hand in his: Mrs. Lyvett, gazing at him in the dusk, saw that his face looked strangely pale.

"How good of you to come in, Frederick! just as though you had known I was alone."

Still he never spoke a word. His breath seemed to be a little uncertain, as if he were in some agitation: and his hand, she now felt, was cold as death.

"Are you not well, my dear?" she asked, quickly.

"I shall never be well again, mother," was the answer he made, in a tone that brought to her she knew not what of alarm. His agitation increased: there was no mistaking it now. Mrs. Lyvett's temples, already throbbing, began to beat violently.

"Something must have happened!" she exclaimed. "What is it? Oh, my dear, don't keep me in suspense."

"I have come in to tell you," he answered. "I meant to tell my father, not you; but he is out, I find, and may not be home while I stay. And—mother—had I the choice given me of telling you, or of having my lips closed for ever, I would choose the latter."

"Something has happened," she repeated, in no less agitation than himself, holding his hand between both of hers.

"Something *dreadful* has happened, mother. Something more than dreadful. I don't know how to find words to relate it in. Oh, rather than do it, it would seem to me a light task to throw myself from this open window to be crushed to death on that pavement below."

Mrs. Lyvett gazed on him. She could not understand. Frederick had sometimes been given to use flowery language, but she had never heard such as this. A sudden idea flashed over her that some accident must have happened to her daughters. Had their carriage ——

"No, no," interrupted Frederick. "What I have to say concerns myself only, and—*and my wife*."

Mrs. Lyvett dropped his hand and leaned back in her chair. The mention of the latter individual did not bring her pleasure, but it did ease her fears. She remembered to have heard that Miss May's temper was not good. Had she and Frederick been quarrelling?

But she was startled out of this thought and out of her restored coolness together. Frederick had suddenly bent his face upon her shoulders, and burst into a storm of tears. The strain upon his feelings, of what he had that evening been obliged to undergo, had now reached its extreme tension, and unmanned him.

Aghast, frightened, Mrs. Lyvett would have risen to call for restoratives, but he held her where she was. "Just a minute or two—mother, bear with me—and then I'll tell you."

And how he accomplished his task and did tell her, he never knew. Looking back at that hour in after life, it never seemed to him but as so many prolonged minutes of horror whose very recollection could only be shuddered at. Mrs. Lyvett grew colder than a stone as she listened.

He did not tell her the worst then—namely, his own conviction of the truth of the accusation. Rather he led her to infer that it must be some terrible mistake which investigation would disprove. For his mother's sake he did this; ay, and perhaps also for his unhappy wife's. But Mrs. Lyvett seemed to have grasped at the worst aspect, as if by instinct. Whether true or false, whether to be proved or disproved later, it was a fearful disgrace to have fallen upon the family; one that would make their name a by-word in the mouths of men. No wonder that Frederick Lyvett, prostrate with the blow, should give vent to his feelings as does a woman.

"Oh, mother," he sobbed, "forgive me that I have brought it upon you! In knowing that the wretchedness, the ignominy, cannot fall solely on myself, lies my chief punishment. It seems to me greater than I can bear."

How can a mother, a loving, gentle mother as was Mrs. Lyvett, resist her boy's penitence, his tears? She bent down her head and cried with him.

"If you would but reproach me! If you would but blame me, mother!"

"My dear, I cannot reproach you; that I shall never do," she answered, the bitter tears raining from her eyes. "It is for you I feel, for you that my heart is aching. But if you had but listened to your father, when he said that person was not a fit wife for you, how different things would have been! If you had but listened to me when I prayed you to wait the changes that time might bring about; to have patience; not to be betrayed into a self-willed and disobedient marriage! I told you, then, my darling, that a blessing would not attend such. It never does."

Frederick Lyvett groaned. His heart was torn with remorse and anguish, and he hid his face away from his mother.

"Where are you going now?" she asked, when, the interview over, but not the distress, he rose to leave.

In truth, he did not know. To return to his rooms at Mrs. Cooke's, with their attendant remembrances, seemed more than he could that night bear.

"Will you stay here to-night, in your own room, Frederick?"

"No, no," he hastily replied. "But thank you all the same, mother."

Wringing her hand with a farewell pressure, he quitted the room. It was then nearly eleven. But Frederick Lyvett had lingered too long. Thompson was opening the hall door to admit his sisters. He slipped within a small room on one side the hall.

But if Mrs. Lyvett was lenient to her son, Mr. Lyvett was not. She gave compassion; he reproaches. Most frightfully did he feel the blow, and the disgrace it brought with it.

"Father," spoke Frederick, in his humility and distress, "I deserve all you can say, and more. The repentance of my whole life will not suffice to atone for it."

The examination took place before the magistrates, and certain facts were testified to. Upon which Sophia Lyvett, otherwise May, otherwise Penryn, was commited to take her trial.

"Why, the very plurality of names would be enough disgrace, let alone anything worse," exclaimed Mr. Lyvett to his friend and partner, Henry Castlerosse.

CHAPTER XIX.

CONDEMNED.

THE trial was just over, and the suffocating court began to empty itself. What with the intense heat of the weather, the crowded arena, and the close, tainted atmosphere, even the calm judges themselves thought they should never be cool again. The judges had retired quickly from the scene, the oldest and gravest of them with the tears yet wet upon his cheeks, for he had been moved to no ordinary emotion while passing the awful sentence of DEATH upon the young and lovely woman who stood in the dock before him. It was no common case which had brought the public together that day, and the prisoner's was no common crime. Sure never had a dark deed been committed involving so great an interest, or whose attendant circumstances comprised so mysterious a field of romance. What had been the previous career of the lady (let us call her so: she held that position when arrested), people could not exactly learn. Some told one tale, and some another: in these unhappy cases, the most outrageous stories get promulgated. All they knew for certain was, that she was now found guilty of the great crime for which she had been tried, and was condemned to death.

Not a single word was said of recommending her to mercy. The jury had considered that there were no extenuating circumstances.

Poor Sophia Lyvett! Could Mrs. Cooke's theory have been the truth—that she had not been herself when she committed the fatal act? One would indeed think so. Or surely she would not have put away the poor little baby with its marks of identity about it—the clothes. The clothes, and even the cord. She thought, no doubt, that she had put it all out of sight for ever. Oh, unhappy, mistaken criminals! When you do these things in the silence and secrecy of the dark night, and think that there is no eye upon you, that in this world, at least, you are safe from detection, you forget that there is ONE EYE, above, which never slumbers or sleeps; that the ways of the avenging angel are not as your poor, narrow-sighted ways, and that what you deemed was a secret between you and the darkness, shall speedily be proclaimed upon the house-tops! So it was here. *This* one was arrested, committed, and had this day taken her trial; been found guilty, and condemned to death. Never was guilt more conclusively brought home to man or woman. The deceit she had practised upon him who was now her husband, Frederick Lyvett, also came in for its share of opprobrium. Not one, no not one, had been found to pity or excuse her, in spite of her youth and beauty. The learned judge had said, in passing sentence, that never had he tried a woman whose crime, as it seemed to him, was of a deeper dye, or upon whom punishment would be more justly inflicted; and he adjured her —and it was here his feelings gave way—to give her mind wholly to repentance and to prepare for death, for that no mercy whatever would be accorded her in this world. The unfortunate creature was hissed by the idlers outside when she was removed from the court, as she had been hissed at her appearance there; and people gloried in saying to each other that they would gladly walk ten miles to see her hung. Public indignation spoke out loud against the miserable Sophia Lyvett.

A small knot of men stood talking together, ere they left the court, some of them in barristers'-gowns. The counsel engaged in the case had hastened away, but others lingered. Amid them stood young Mr. Jones the lawyer, junior partner in that eminent firm, Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett. Mr. Jones was a lion that day.

"Of course," observed Mr. Jones, who was uncommonly fond of the sound of his own tongue, "there was no hope, from the first, that she would get off; but it will be an awkward stain, mind you, to have clinging to the family. James Lyvett—it's true he is the very incarnation of pride—will never hold up his head again."

"It's bad enough for him, but what must it be for Fred himself?" quoth a grave queen's counsel, who was intimate with the Lyvetts.

"Poor fellow!" responded Mr. Jones. "He has never held up his head since she was taken."

"Is he disenchanted yet, Jones?" demanded Mr. Dunn, a very young man in a wig, who had begun life in the office of Lyvett, Castlerosse, and Lyvett, side by side with Mr. Jones, but had afterwards gone to the bar.

"I should think so. It was an awful piece of duplicity to palm off upon him."

"The marriage, you mean."

Mr. Jones nodded. "But Fred did play the fool richly, there's no denying it."

"Every man does, when he makes a low woman his wife," observed the silk gown.

"And Fred has the pleasant consolation of knowing that he plunged into it of his own accord," returned Mr. Jones. "Mr. Lyvett said, the other day, that he must be—what was it?—a martyr to remorse, or some such poetical sentence. They said all they possibly could to him, Mr. Lyvett and James, and his mother too, I believe, to dissuade him off the girl, and, the more they said, the more obstinately Fred was bent on marrying her. They told him she would bring on him a life's disgrace: and she has brought it."

"But they could not have known about the—the antecedents?" cried Mr. Dunn.

"What a dolt you are, Dunn!" was Mr. Jones's answer, its complimentary tone being accounted for by the fact that he and the gentleman had remained close friends. "If they had known anything of *them*, they would have locked Fred up in a lunatic asylum first; and Fred himself would have gone to one, rather than have done it. Fred's not deficient in honour: only in brains."

"There's many a one with less brains than Frederick Lyvett who contrives to make a show in the world," remarked the queen's counsel, significantly.

"You know old Castlerosse, most of you," resumed Mr. Jones; "know how hot-headed he is?"

A general nod from the hearers.

"Well, old Castlerosse, by the strangest accident, happened to be down at the country place where Fred went to get married. Fred thought he should do the job all quietly in an out-of-the-way, rustic parish, and nobody be any the wiser: just as *she* thought, I suppose, when she used that fatal packing-cord. The ceremony was on, and the parson had come to the interesting sentence, 'Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife?' when old Castlerosse started forward, like the ghost in the play, and forbade the marriage. Charley Castlerosse says he wished himself up in heaven just then."

"Charley Castlerosse!"

"He was down there, acting bridegroom. No—what do you call it?—groomsman. Charley told me he knew it was all up with him the

moment he heard his uncle's voice. And so it has proved: for old Castlerosse won't do the least earthly thing for him since, and the fact has got about; and Charley, poor fellow, dare not walk through Middlesex for fear of the writs. But I was going to tell you. Old Castlerosse, in his rage, nearly lifted the church-roof off with noise; and finding that did not do, he calmed down to entreaty, and did all but go prostrate on his knees to Fred, praying him to stop the marriage, or at least to delay it till Mr. Lyvett's appearance, who was speeding down on the telegraph wires. It was of no use. Fred was like a mule in his obstinacy, and would hear no reason. He ordered the parson to proceed: and the parson, finding the papers were in order, and both of them of age, had no plea for refusing. So Fred and the girl were made one, old Castlerosse protesting against it, and telling him he was entering on perdition."

"Perdition it has turned out, and no mistake," said Mr. Dunn. "There can be only one thing worse than having your wife hung, and that's your mother. I wonder Fred Lyvett does not hang himself, and get out of it all."

"Fred's going on the Continent, there to hide his diminished head," said Mr. Jones. "He was only waiting the result of the trial. Had it been an acquittal ——"

"It never could have been an acquittal," interrupted Serjeant Wrangle. "The proofs were too clear."

"Well, but there's an 'if' in all cases, and the law deals in flaws and miracles," persisted Mr. Jones. "Had an acquittal been pronounced, Fred would have stopped in England until he had rid himself of her by a legal process. *If he could*, that is: my opinion's against it. When you marry a woman, you marry her with all her antecedents, you see: it is a different thing from anything that may happen afterwards. However, the law will rid him of her by a more summary act, and Fred starts directly. Fred's travels were finally decided upon in a family conclave, which Mr. James refused to attend. He is awfully incensed against him, is James."

"How does he mean to live?"

"He has an income, and the family will make it more. So he means to vegetate in Poland, or Siberia, or Hungary; anywhere that the English don't congregate, and there expiate his follies."

"Will he never come back?"

"Oh, sometime, I suppose, when the remembrance of the affair has died out of men's minds."

"Well, it is a terrible calamity to have fallen on him," remarked the grave Q.C. "I always liked Fred Lyvett."

"I say, Jones," cried Mr. Dunn, watching the departure of the elder and higher men of the profession, "did you not know Miss May once? I never saw her that I remember."

"Oh, she was only a child when you were there, Dunn. Yes, I knew her."

"And went in for some spooning, didn't you?"

"No. I might have gone in for some, but she cured me of the inclination beforehand."

"How did she cure you?"

"Threw a lot of poison over me."

"Poison!"

"In the shape of a basin of greased coffee-grounds. It ruined my waistcoat. And all because I just spoke a civil word to her: How are you, Miss May?—or something of the kind. That's what she did, Dunn."

"By Jove! A nice young lady! I should think Fred Lyvett will put on mourning for her!"

"Have his coat-tails bound with crape!"

"By the way, Jones, is there any truth in the report that she was really married before?"

"I don't know. Some people say she was. It has not been proved. Nothing certain has come out about it."

"I wonder if Fred Lyvett knows? And now I am off, Jones. You may as well give a look in at my chambers to-night."

"All right, Dunn."

Sophia Lyvett had never attempted to deny her guilt. She may have thought the proofs of it were too overwhelming to admit of dispute. Both before the trial and especially after it, she seemed to be sunk in a state of prostrate apathy, which the authorities set down to the score of sullenness, but which was probably the effect of despair. Only once, and that was to her husband, did she enter upon any extenuation of herself. It was in one of the interviews he was allowed to hold with her in prison. In his delicacy of feeling—and of that Frederick Lyvett had a great deal, and was essentially a gentleman—he had abstained from questioning her as to the episodes of her past life, which she had kept concealed from him: not once did he mention the unfortunate child who had come to light so unexpectedly. He retained for her his tenderness and consideration of manner when with her, and on this day she had broken out into sobs as she spoke with him.

"Don't think of me worse than you can help," she whispered, lest the words might reach the ears of one of the keepers of the prison who stood within sight, but was looking the other way. "I was mad when I did it, Frederick. I was quite mad."

And he found she was alluding to the deed for which she would have to suffer.

"The bringing home of the little boy on that day, when you and I

had but just got home ourselves, terrified me nearly to death. Had I known where my mother was to be found, I should have taken him to her, and no ill would have come of it. But I did not know. I had no friend or acquaintance in all the wide wilderness of this great city whom I could trust, or to whom I could take him. The woman left him asleep on the bed, and after watching him for some time I ran away into the drawing-room, and sat down with my despair, asking myself what I could do. Once it came into my mind to try and make a friend of Mrs. Cooke, and beg her to allow him to be taken care of by her servants in private, until I could make other arrangements for him."

"Oh that you had!" broke from the dry lips of Frederick Lyvett.

"But I feared she might refuse: I knew she was an old friend of your family. The most improbable ideas kept surging through my brain: that I would carry him off to the nearest workhouse and leave him there on its steps with some gold tied round him; that I would knock at the door of some poor cottage dwelling, and beg of the people to take care of him for a week or so, and offer them a guinea a day for it; that I would go back to the lodgings I had occupied at Brompton and put him and a bag of money into the landlady's hands, and say, 'I am in a strait; keep him for me for a little while.' While these thoughts were surging through my brain, I heard a double-knock at the front door, and thought it was you. I started from my chair in awful terror and clasped my hands, wondering what I could do. At that self-same moment the child burst into a loud cry, and I thought all was over with me. Oh, Frederick, as truly as that heaven is above me, I believe I was in that moment mad; driven mad by terror and perplexity. I declare that I have no true and clear recollection of what I did. And, after all, it was not you who had knocked. Don't you pity me? Oh, *cannot* you pity me?"

"With my whole heart," he said, with a wail. "But, Sophia, when matters had come to this pass that day, and the child was brought home and left upon your hands, why did you not make a confidant of me? Who knows but I—might have forgiven even that? I had made you my wife."

"And who knows but you might have thrust me out at the front gate? I should have expected it."

"No," he answered, "I should not have done that. I should, at any rate, have provided for you, and tried to shield you from the frowns of the world."

He asked not another question; he inquired not, then or later, into matters of the past. The lines in his brow were deep with pain; and perhaps always would be.

And that was the only time Sophia Lyvett alluded in any way to the calamity which had brought her where she was. During the other

interviews her husband was permitted to hold with her, she was studiously reserved and self-contained, taking little more notice of him than she took of the gaoler.

CHAPTER XX.

AT LADY HARRIET'S.

It wanted but three days to that fixed for the execution, and the wretched prisoner, Sophia Lyvett, was in the condemned cell. Since the trial she had been remarkably quiet; deemed, in fact, morose and sullen by those about her. Whatever her inward anguish might be, it was not betrayed to them. The chaplain could make no impression on her whatever; his visits, his conversations, were suffered, not welcomed: even her father and mother, who had been allowed an interview, were received by her with the same callous demeanour. Poor old broken-down and broken-hearted people, who were convulsed with grief. The shock had reached them through the newspapers; by that medium alone had they first become acquainted with the position their daughter was placed in.

On this day, Friday, the prisoner's mood changed. Whether it was the near approach of the end that was startling her to feeling, or whether—as may be inferred—it was that a sudden loophole of escape presented itself, most unaccountably overlooked before, cannot be told. Certain it is, that early on this day she grew strangely excited, demanding that her mother should be sent for without an instant's delay.

In compliance with her wish, urged in terms that almost startled the authorities, the mother was summoned. It would appear that the prisoner then alluded, but not clearly, to certain matters and people connected with her previous history, not known before. She spoke in an undertone; and those whose duty it was to be present caught but a word here and there. The prisoner was urging her mother to some step, some exertion in her behalf.

"Sophiar," wailed the poor woman, through her tears, "I would go to all the great folks in the land, I would go to the Queen herself, I would walk my legs off, if I thought it would be of any avail to save or even lengthen your life, poor child!"

"Don't I tell you it will save my life?" feverishly uttered the prisoner; "it must save it. After all I have now said, do you think this gentleman will refuse? Why do you stop here, mother, losing time? It is short enough for what has to be done."

"Give me a moment, child. Let me think over what you have said and see my way clear. It has bewildered me."

The prisoner turned impatiently away, and the mother sat thinking, her head down, moving first one hand and then another, as the various

points of what she was deliberating upon presented themselves to her mind.

"If your Aunt Foxaby was but with us now, Sophiar!" she suddenly exclaimed, raising her head. "She might help to some purpose in this. Her people was great folks theirselves."

"You don't want my Aunt Foxaby or any other help," repeated Sophia, in her sudden access of excitement, all the more uncontrollable from her previous apathy. "Nobody can do me any good but *he:* and you are enough to go to him. And if you don't, mother, and don't get his promise to act, and I suffer on Monday, you will be guilty of my murder."

Mrs. May rose, heaving a deep sigh. Most anxious, indeed, was she to do what she could for her unfortunate daughter; but she did not altogether comprehend what was to be done, or how to set about it.

"The first thing, I suppose, Sophiar, is to find out where he lives. You say it is near Belgrave Square."

"I say it used to be some street or square in that neighbourhood. I forget its name and number. I"—the unfortunate prisoner looked round, as if, in a moment of aberration, she forgot her desk and things were not at hand, as in her own drawing-room—"I had the address; but it is not here. Get a 'Court Directory': you'll find it there."

"A what?" asked Mrs. May.

"A book called the 'Court Directory,'" explained the prisoner: and her tone was one of irritation; for in her present awakened excitement every moment that was lost seemed of more value than gold. "They will let you look at one in a bookseller's shop: if not, you must go to the expense of buying it. You will not grudge that to save me."

"Oh, child!" uttered the mother, with a rush of tears, "how can you say these cruel things? I would give my own life thankfully to save yours."

"You will not forget the name?" said the prisoner.

The poor woman shook her head. "I shall only remember it too well. Is he married?"

"What has that to do with it?" cried the prisoner, exasperated at the unnecessary question. "No; he is not."

No! How could she utter so deliberate an untruth? she, so near the grave!

Mrs. May waited to ask no more. She departed, and proceeded to her work—which was a task of delicacy. Later in the day, she found herself in the aristocratic regions of Belgrave Square. She had apparently discovered the address required, for she ascended the steps of a house there without hesitation. A formidable footman, all splendour and powder, threw open the door.

"Does Captain Devereux live here?"

"No; he don't."

"No!" she repeated, with a petrified, scared look. "Where does he live, then?"

"Colonel Devereux lives here."

"Colonel Devereux! Perhaps it is the same," she added, after a pause. "I'm sure, though, it was Captain Devereux I was told to ask for."

Even so. Sophia had unwittingly spoken of him by the name most familiar to her mind.

"Colonel Devereux was Captain Devereux once," the man condescended to add. "What do you want?"

"I want to see him," she replied, making as if she would enter.

"Not so fast, my good woman. The Colonel is not to be seen."

"Oh, but I must see him; I must see him," she returned, in excitement. "Please, sir! good sir! let me enter!"

Her tears fell, her voice rose to a wail; she pressed forward, and the man pushed her back. In the midst of this commotion, two ladies, who had alighted from a carriage, came up the steps.

"Is anything the matter?" inquired one of them, turning a very plain, but kind face upon the applicant.

"This person wants to see the Colonel, my lady. I told her he was absent, but she does not believe me."

"Oh, ma'am, oh, my lady," cried Mrs. May, her ears catching unconsciously at the title, as her equally unconscious hands caught humbly at the arm of Lady Harriet Devereux, "let me see Colonel Devereux, and I will bless you evermore. I come upon an errand of life and death."

"Colonel Devereux is not here at present," returned Lady Harriet. "But is it anything in which I can aid you? Step in; you seem to be in great distress."

She led the way to a room, the other lady entered with her, and the applicant followed. Lady Harriet untied her bonnet, and sat down. Mrs. May stood beyond the table, nervously rubbing one hand over the other.

"What is the matter?" inquired Lady Harriet. "What did you want with Colonel Devereux?"

"To see him; to see him. Oh, ma'am, please to let me see him!"

"Colonel Devereux is not in England," said Lady Harriet, whose composure of manner presented a very great contrast to the excitement of the unfortunate applicant. "He is expected shortly. He may be home even to-day, or he may not be home until next week."

"Next week!" groaned Mrs. May, the last words speaking to her a volume of despair. "Then it would be too late, for she would be in her dreadful grave."

"Can you not explain your business?" resumed Lady Harriet,

surprised at the words, and interested in the stranger's deep and evident tribulation. "You had better sit down. Who are you?"

"My lady, if I tell you who I am, perhaps you will turn from me with horror," she answered, the tears dropping from her eyes, and quite ignoring the permission to sit. "You will, maybe, order your servants to fling me down the steps of your house."

"I think not," said Lady Harriet. "I can feel for distress, no matter what may have led to it. Speak out."

"There's a poor creature—you must have seen it in the newspapers, my lady, for they've been all full of nothing else—now lying in prison, a-waiting to suffer," whispered Mrs. May, putting up her hands to shield her face.

"Sophia Lyvett," interrupted Lady Harriet, "formerly Sophia May. Yes, I have read somewhat of it," she added, in slight hesitation. And the other lady, one younger and far prettier, who had stood at the window looking out, glanced hastily round. It was no other than our old acquaintance from Parkwater, the Countess of Tennygal.

"I am the prisoner's most unhappy mother," said Mrs. May. "Oh, ma'am! don't despise me more than you can help. Indeed, we have always lived respectable till now, and I and her father would have died to save Sophiar from committing such a wicked crime."

"I respect your grief, my poor woman," observed Lady Harriet, after a pause of astonishment; "but what is the purport of your application to me—to Colonel Devereux?"

"I brought him a message from her. If I could deliver it to him, it might lead to the saving of her life. She thinks he might speak for her, and save her."

"Speak for her to whom?"

"Oh, ma'am, I don't much understand: *he* would know, she said. To some high and mighty man who has great power under the Queen."

Lady Harriet caught at the meaning. She supposed that the prisoner wanted the Colonel to intercede with his father, Sir Archibald Devereux —who was the Home Secretary—to spare her life. And this was the exact truth.

"Indeed, I fear she is altogether mistaken," returned Lady Harriet. "The case is of far too grave a nature for Colonel Devereux to interfere with."

"My poor child says she knew the Colonel once, ma'am—though, indeed, she called him Captain, not Colonel. It was while she was out as governess with a grand family in Ireland."

"Yes; at Lady Tennygal's," interposed the Countess, glancing across at Lady Harriet.

Mrs. May turned round: in her tribulation she had forgotten that anyone else was present.

"Like enough it was, ma'am," she answered. "Sophiar, poor

thing, was fond of keeping her doings and her places a secret from us. She says the Colonel can save her life if he will, and that he *must*, for their old acquaintance' sake."

A pause. Neither of the ladies made any comment. Curious ideas, disagreeable reminiscences, were arising to each of them. Lady Harriet flushed crimson to the roots of her hair.

"Let me deal with this, Harriet," somewhat sharply spoke Lady Tennygal, as she turned to the applicant.

"It is impossible that Colonel Devereux could help your daughter, though he were here, and his will ever so good. No one, I fear, can do that. Not all the country could save her."

"Ma'am, perhaps he might," returned poor Mrs. May. "She says he can. Oh, let me try him; let me try him!" she beseechingly added, clasping her hands. "Ladies, if you had a child condemned to death, you would be as anxious as me not to leave a stone unturned to save her. I don't know what you may be to Colonel Devereux: perhaps his sisters: but I ask you, for dear humanity's sake, to let me see him if he comes home in time. She says it is a duty that will lie upon him, and that he knows why."

"Yes," interposed Lady Harriet, rising from her chair, "I promise that you shall. Though I see no possible chance of aid for your daughter, and I think that you must be labouring under a delusion to hope for it, you shall see Colonel Devereux if you will. Poor woman, it is no fault of yours."

"Oh, my lady! Fault of ours! Will you believe that till my poor child was taken, me and her father never knew she had been in any misfortune: and then we did not believe it. It is gospel truth that I am telling you," she sobbed, the hot tears raining from her eyes.

"You shall see him," repeated Lady Harriet, in a kind tone. "If Colonel Devereux returns home in time, you shall certainly see him if you will." And the unhappy woman quitted the room, leaving her thanks behind her.

"Don't let us think about it, Harriet!" cried Lady Tennygal, with impulsive quickness. "Of course one cannot quite help thoughts; they arise unbidden, as I saw they did to you; or quite shut the eyes to the fact that this would seem to bear upon certain old suspicions at Parkwater: but we don't *know*."

Lady Harriet did not immediately answer.

"I don't care to defend Tody, as you know, Harriet; I gave that up long ago. But, as I say, we do not know: and it is always better to look on the bright side than the dark one. Indeed, the dark one in this case would be too horribly dark."

A murmur, half assent, half groan, which she could not entirely suppress, was the only answer given by Lady Harriet Devereux. She alone knew, or ever would know—for she was one to hide her sufferings

away with Heaven—how many wrongs and trials her husband brought upon her. She endured them all, striving ever to be patient and pleasant, even with him: for the sake of her two little girls she would not bring about a rupture with their father. And so she bore: as many another gentle wife has to bear.

(*To be concluded.*)

DELAY.

SOFTLY and sweetly the church bells were ringing,
Calling the world to the Temple of Prayer;
And the westland zephyr was balmily bringing
The Message of God to my charmèd ear.

"But I need not hurry: there's plenty of time,"
I said, as I leaned o'er the window-sill;
"'Tis so pleasant to list to that lullaby-chime,
Like the song of the naiad in woodland rill!"

A warrior band, with its loud "fanfare,"
Now drowned every note of the silvery bell;
But the troop passed on: the street was clear;
And again I heard the chime ringing still!

"Lo! what is this now? 'Tis a bridal suite,
Gorgeous and favour-decked, dashing along!
Carriages numberless fill all the street,
Which is lined by a dense and admiring throng."

I, too, gazed delighted; and thought not of prayer,
Until pageant and followers all were gone;
Then I started—"I'm not yet too late; for, there,
Those angel bells are still ringing on!"

But a carriage draws up, and a caller is in it;
How tiresome!—"Ah! ready for walking, I see;
Well, well, my good friend, I'll not keep you a minute;
You'll not find a *Molière's fâcheuse* in me!"

She knew not herself; when once she was seated,
She rattled unweariedly gossip and glee:
And with topics of scandal my shocked ears were greeted,
Till she said—"But 'tis time now, my friend, P. P. C."

Oh, what a relief! I would rather bear death
Than to spend all my life with a gossiping bore!
I rushed to the window—I held in my breath,
I listened—in vain!—the ringing was o'er!

IGNOTA.

A. HOPKINS. J. SWAIN.

VAN DUREN'S DREAM.

THE ARGOSY.

SEPTEMBER, 1875.

A SECRET OF THE SEA.

By the Author of "In the Dead of Night."

CHAPTER XXV.

ELEANOR'S RESOLVE.

"I'M in no particular hurry, doctor, to get back to London," Sir Thomas Dudgeon had quietly hinted to his medical man. "I daresay the House can get on without me quite as well as with me, so you needn't hurry yourself to say I'm fit for harness again till you feel quite sure in your conscience that I am so."

Dr. Welstead was not slow to take the hint, and he kept on calling at Stammars two or three times a week, and sending one innocuous draught after another, which draughts Sir Thomas conscientiously poured into the ash-pan when his wife was not looking, till the baronet's holiday had extended itself to the beginning of May. But by this time Sir Thomas looked so well and rosy, and was in possession of such a hearty appetite, that a vague suspicion that she was being duped began to haunt her ladyship's mind. She said nothing to her husband, but made her preparations in silence. Then, one morning at the breakfast-table, the shell exploded.

"To-day is Wednesday, dear," she said, "and I have made all arrangements for our going up to town on Saturday morning. Dr. Welstead seems quite at a loss how to treat you: indeed, country practitioners, as a rule, are not competent to deal with anything beyond a simple case of measles; so, on Saturday afternoon, I will myself drive you to see Sir Knox Timpany, and wait for you while you consult that eminent authority, who, I doubt not, will make you as well as ever you were, in the course of a very few days."

Sir Thomas fumed and fretted, but her ladyship was inexorable. Go he must; and when he saw there was no help for it, he made a merit of necessity; but at the same time he registered a silent vow

that not all the wives in England should drag him to the door of Sir Knox Timpany.

At the last moment, however, the baronet and Gerald started for London alone. Late on Friday, Lady Dudgeon received a telegram. Her only sister was very ill, and it was needful that she should hurry off without an hour's delay. "Considering all that I have done for Caroline, it is really very ungrateful of her to be ill at a time like this," she grumbled to her husband. "She knew how anxious I was to get back to town, and she might have doctored herself up for another month or two. I hope to goodness she won't die till the season is nearly over. I can't bear myself in mourning."

"Your only sister, my dear," remarked Sir Thomas, soothingly. "I wouldn't leave her, if I were you, while there's the least danger. Your conscience might prick you afterwards, you know."

"Stuff!" was her ladyship's rejoinder. "Of course, I shall do what is proper; but if I were to die to-morrow, Caroline's first thought would be how soon after that event she might begin to wear flounces again."

Without wishing his sister-in-law any harm, Sir Thomas would not have been sorry if her illness had kept his wife at her bedside for half a year. The thought of having a few weeks, or even a few days, in London, without being supervised by her ladyship, was to bring back the feelings of his youth when school broke up for the summer holidays. In fact, during the three weeks that elapsed before her ladyship joined him in town, he was more like a schoolboy let loose than the fancy sketch of him with which the *Pembridge Gazette* one week favoured its readers, wherein he was described as a senator, grave and staid, whose trained and powerful intellect was perpetually engaged in grappling with the most tremendous social and political problems of our age.

After a little dinner, quiet and early, at which Gerald generally sat down with him, Sir Thomas would post off to the House. But an hour, or an hour and a half, there was quite enough for him. Whist and a prime cigar at his club were far preferable to prosy speeches by people whom he did not know, and on subjects about which he did not care twopence.

Since the day of his confession in the library, Gerald had seen very little of Eleanor. If they met casually in passing from one room to another, a bow and a faint smile was all the greeting that passed between them. When they met at the dinner-table, no ordinary observer would have noticed any difference in their demeanour towards each other. Gerald talked as much as ever he had done: he knew that both Sir Thomas and his wife liked him to make talk for them: but fewer of his observations were now addressed directly to Miss Lloyd than used to be the case at one time. Sometimes he even turned over the music for Eleanor when she played after dinner; but

had Lady Dudgeon been the most Argus-eyed of dowagers, instead of the most unsuspicious, she could not possibly have found fault with his demeanour on such occasions. He was Sir Thomas Dudgeon's secretary—and nothing more.

Eleanor had received his confession in a spirit somewhat different from what he had expected. He had thought that her pride would be more deeply wounded by the deception he had practised on her than it appeared to be. That it was wounded, he knew full well; but when he parted from her at the close of the interview, he did not fail to notice the quiver of her lip, and the longing, wistful look in her eyes. In his previous thoughts of her, it was evident he had not calculated sufficiently on the effect which his frank confession and prayer for forgiveness would have on a generous and loving disposition like that of Eleanor. It seemed by no means unlikely, as Gerald said to himself afterwards, when thinking over the interview, that she had indeed so far forgiven him as to make his reinstatement in her regards the question merely of a little time and perseverance; and under other circumstances he would not have allowed a day to pass without attempting a renewal of his suit. But fixed as he was just then, he could not bring his mind to the adoption of such a course. That he had fallen somewhat in Eleanor's esteem, that he had sunk to a lower level in her thoughts, he could not doubt; and however much she might feel inclined to forgive him, it was questionable whether—had the circumstances of the case really been such as she believed them to be—she could ever have looked upon him with quite the same eyes as before. Such a change as this Gerald did not care to face. He preferred that, for a little while, she should think all was over between them; that he had given up all thoughts of winning her for his wife. He knew that before very long she would have to be told everything, and till that time should come he would speak no word of love to her again. The more hardly she thought of him now, the greater would be the rebound towards him when, from other lips than his, she should hear the whole strange story that must soon be told her.

About a fortnight after sending his first letter to Kelvin, Gerald followed it up with another. But again came the same answer as before, that Mr. Kelvin was still too ill to attend to business. Gerald was debating in his own mind as to the advisability of going over to Pembridge and seeking an interview with Kelvin, when the receipt of certain news from Ambrose Murray decided him to wait a short time longer. Murray told him the result of the inquiries in Wales, and how he and Peter Byrne were going to start for Marhyddoc in the course of a few days; and Gerald was entreated to follow them as quickly as possible. Under these circumstances there seemed to Gerald no necessity for troubling Kelvin any further at present. Should Ambrose Murray find that which he was going to Wales to search for,

then would all necessity for concealment on his part be at an end. One of his first acts would be to ask for the daughter who knew him not. Then would come the time for Gerald to say who and what he was. His first act after Eleanor knew that he was no longer John Pomeroy, the poor secretary, but Gerald Warburton, the heir to Mr. Lloyd's wealth, would be to tell her how truly he still loved her, and to ask her to become his wife. Let her, for a week or two longer, think that he had yielded her up without a struggle: in a very little while she should discover that no power on earth could make him yield her up—nothing, save her own deliberate dismissal of him, could do that. Thus it was that Gerald left Stammars without saying a word of farewell to Eleanor; and she, sitting half heart-broken by the window of her own room, saw him drive off to the station, and cried after him, "Oh, my darling, why have you left me? Perhaps I shall never see you again."

Gerald had only done Eleanor simple justice when he said to himself that she was ready to forgive and forget the past. "He has confessed everything to me, and confession is atonement," she said to herself. "He need not have said a word to me, had he been so minded; but the very fact of his telling me everything is proof sufficient that he is no longer seeking to win me for my money, but for myself only."

Day by day she had been expecting to receive some word, some look even, from him which would tell her that his feelings were still unchanged; but day passed after day, and neither word nor look was vouchsafed her. She was chilled and hurt by Gerald's persistent silence and evident avoidance of her. Could it be, she asked herself, that he thought he had sinned past forgiveness? To prove that such was not the case, she would be more gracious and affable towards him than she had ever been before. She would endeavour to let him see, as far as a modest maiden might do so, that he had nothing to fear; that the past was forgiven, and that the future rested with himself alone. But Gerald might have been made of marble, so cold and impassive did he seem to the tender-hearted girl, who had only discovered of late how much she loved him.

Then her pride came to her aid, and she tried her best to emulate Gerald's indifference. She laughed and talked, and seemed altogether merrier than of old; but no one knew what she suffered in the solitude of her own room.

Now it was that she determined to put into execution a project that had been more or less in her thoughts for a long time. She was tired of the empty, frivolous life that she had been leading for some time past. It had seemed very pleasant to her while the freshness lasted, but that had now worn off, and she had made up her mind that she would have no more of it—or only a taste of it now and then as a relief from more serious duties. What she wanted was some plain,

earnest work to do—some work that would benefit others as well as herself. For a long time she had seemed like one groping in the dark; but at last she thought she saw a clear line of duty marked out for her footsteps, the following of which might not be altogether without avail.

And now her purpose grew firm within her. All was at an end between her and Pomeroy. She had only herself to consult. In hard work she might, perchance, find an anodyne for her wound. In any case, she would try to do so.

"I suppose, my dear, that you won't object to give me a month at Baden this autumn?" said Lady Dudgeon to her husband, as they sat together one morning, about a couple of days before their projected return to London.

"Oh, ho! it's come to that, has it?" answered the baronet. "Well, I suppose you must have your own way in the matter, although you know that I hate both the place and the class of people one meets there. I suppose we can take Eleanor with us? It will be a treat to her, and company for you."

"Eleanor's a little fool!"

"Possibly so: you know best, I daresay."

"She tells me that she is going to leave us."

"Eleanor going to leave us!" Sir Thomas looked quite dumfounded. At this moment Eleanor entered the room. "What is this I hear, little one?" he cried. "You are not going to leave us, surely!"

"For a little while, dear Sir Thomas. Perhaps not for long," answered Eleanor.

"I'm sorry for that—very sorry, indeed. I had grown to like you almost as much as if you were a daughter of my own."

Tears came into Eleanor's eyes. She crossed the room, and taking Sir Thomas's hand in both hers, pressed it to her lips. "My gratitude—my love, if you care for it—will always be yours! I can never repay even a tithe of the kindness shown me by Lady Dudgeon and yourself."

"Eleanor, I have no patience with you!" cried Lady Dudgeon, dipping her pen viciously in the inkstand.

"But where is the girl going, and what is she going to do?" asked the baronet.

"Let her answer for herself."

"You will think it very strange of me, I daresay," said Eleanor; "but Miss Mulhouse, whose name is no doubt familiar to you, has offered to find me a position in one of the Homes for Destitute Girls, which she is trying to establish in different parts of London."

"Heaven bless us!" exclaimed Sir Thomas. "You don't mean to say that you are going to leave a place like Stammars on purpose to spend your days in a back-slum in the east end of London!"

"I am going to try to find something to do," said Eleanor. "I am going to try to make myself of some little use in the world."

"A madcap scheme, my dear—I can call it nothing else," said the old gentleman, with a melancholy shake of the head. "If you feel charitably disposed, a twenty-pound note every Christmas, judiciously laid out, will go a long way—a very long way, indeed."

"To give money alone does not seem to me enough. I want to work for those poor helpless ones; to labour for them with head and hands; to learn their histories and their wants; to win their sympathies, and to make their lives a little less hard, if I can possibly do so."

"My dear," said Sir Thomas, turning to his wife, "what a pity it is that you have not found a husband for Miss Lloyd!"

"Miss Lloyd has had three most eligible offers since she placed herself under my care."

"And she refused them?"

"Every one."

"Then her case must be a hopeless one indeed."

"I have argued and reasoned with her, but all to no purpose," said her ladyship. "She is determined to have her own headstrong way. But I prophesy that before six months are over we shall have Miss Lloyd back at Stammars, tired and disgusted with a task which may look very nice in theory, but which must be excessively unpleasant when reduced to practice."

"She will always be welcome at Stammars whenever she likes to come back to us."

"You won't think me ungrateful for leaving you, will you, Sir Thomas?" pleaded Eleanor.

"That I won't, my dear. I'll never think anything but what's good of you."

Thus it was that Eleanor Lloyd, sitting in the window of her room, watching Gerald Warburton drive away, cried to herself: "Perhaps I shall never see him again!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

POD'S STRATAGEM.

Days and weeks passed away, but still Matthew Kelvin did not get better. His condition fluctuated strangely. Sometimes for days together there would be a slow but sure improvement. Appetite and strength would alike increase, and his mother would grow glad at heart, thinking that she should soon see him out and about again, and as well as ever. But some morning, without the least warning, there would come a terrible relapse, which, in the course of two or three hours, would undo the improvement that it had taken days to effect, flinging him helplessly back as some strong wave flings back a desperate swimmer the moment his foot touches the shore, leaving him, buffeted and

bruised, and with decreased strength, to struggle again from the same point that he started from before. So it was with Matthew Kelvin. There were times and seasons after one of these strange relapses when to those about him he seemed on the very verge of the grave: times and seasons when the patient himself prayed that if there were to be no release from his sufferings but death, then that death might come, and come quickly. Then would Dr. Druce be summoned in hot haste by Mrs. Kelvin. Presently the old gentleman would totter slowly into the room, smile blandly round at the anxious faces about him, and, both by his manner and words, quietly pooh-pooh their exaggerated alarm. "I told you from the first," he would cheerfully remark, "that the case was an obstinate one, and you must not allow these apparent relapses to alarm you. The dying struggles of disease are often the most severe. The garrison will sometimes make its most desperate sortie after it knows that in the course of a few days it will be compelled to capitulate unconditionally. For the present the pain is over. I will send a composing draught, which the patient must take at once; and to-morrow I doubt not but we shall find ourselves much stronger and better."

Better next day Mr. Kelvin would undoubtedly be, but not stronger. Each one of these mysterious relapses seemed to leave him a little weaker than before, a little less able to cope with the enemy that seemed bent on sapping away his life by slow degrees. But of this he hinted nothing to his mother. Her anxiety on his account was deep enough already; there was no need to add to her distress; so he kept his own counsel and put a cheerful face on the matter, and would declare, on waking after one of the composing draughts, that he felt stronger and better than he had felt for weeks.

If any of Mrs. Kelvin's friends ever hinted to her that Dr. Druce was very old and very infirm, and that it might perhaps not be unadvisable to seek some further advice, the old lady was up in arms in a moment. "Because people are old and not quite so active as they may once have been, I hope they are not necessarily fools!" she would tartly remark. "If that is the case, I must be a great fool, indeed. Dr. Druce has practised in Pembridge for fifty years, and if his experience is not worth more than that of a man thirty years his junior, I should like to know what is the good of experience at all. No, no: the older a doctor grows, the cleverer he must become, if he has any brains at all." After such an outburst as this, there was nothing more to be said, especially as the patient himself seemed to have every confidence in Dr. Druce's skill and ability to cope with the strange malady from which he was suffering.

Nothing more was now said about Olive Deane's return to her duties at Stammars. It was an understood thing that she could not possibly be spared while her cousin's health remained as it was at present. Lady

Dudgeon had very kindly consented to keep the situation open for her for a few weeks longer, in the hope that by that time Mr. Kelvin's health might be so far restored as to allow of Olive's resumption of her duties; but Olive, though she said nothing, had far different objects in view. She laughed to herself when she read Lady Dudgeon's note, and then tossed it contemptuously into the fire.

She had, indeed, long before this time, contrived to render herself indispensable both to her aunt and her cousin. She could not always be in the sick-room. Many were the hours that she and her aunt sat together alone. Such hours she did her best to brighten by means of pleasant, genial talk and long readings from her aunt's favourite books, and the old lady was proportionately grateful.

"I often feel as if you had always lived with us," she would sometimes say to Olive. "You seem altogether like one of ourselves, and however we shall be able to let you go again, I can't tell. If Matthew were a marrying man, he might do worse, my dear, than make you his wife. But that is out of the question, for I don't suppose he will ever marry now."

Olive was not quite so sure on that point as her aunt seemed to be. Her affectionate devotion to her cousin seemed as if it were about to bear fruit at last. He could not bear to let anyone but Olive wait upon him or minister to his needs. Even to his mother he once or twice spoke with a slight tinge of impatience: coming after Olive, her waiting upon him seemed slow and bungling indeed. "If you would only sit down in that easy-chair, mother, and let Olive attend to me!" he would say. "I want you to tell me all the gossip, and not to be bothering yourself and me about the quality of my beef-tea."

As for having any common paid nurse to wait upon him, that was altogether out of the question now.

As he sat in his easy-chair, one day, propped up with pillows and sipping at a cup of barley-water, while Olive sat on a low hassock close by, waiting till he should be ready to give her the cup, he said to her suddenly, after a long silence: "I believe, Olive, that if I ever do get better—which I sometimes doubt—I shall owe my life far more to your care and attention than to old Druce's filthy mixtures. I shall never know how to repay you. I never knew that you had half the splendid qualities in you that you have shown of late. But we men can hardly ever see further than our noses where a woman is concerned. I am afraid I shall have to remain your debtor to the end of the chapter."

"You talk very great nonsense, Matthew," she said, in a voice that was hardly louder than a whisper. "You my debtor, indeed!"

One of her cousin's hands rested on the arm of his chair; by accident, it may be, one of Olive's hands found its way to the same place. Their fingers touched. Matthew put down his empty cup, and

taking Olive's hand in both his, drew her towards him. Then he put one arm round her neck, and drawing her face close to his, he kissed her on the forehead. They both looked round with a start. Mrs. Kelvin had quietly opened the door, and was standing there with a smile on her face.

"Two's company—three's none," said the old lady, pleasantly. "I'll go back to my room for a little while, and next time I come I will be discreet enough to cough before opening the door."

"You dear old goose!" said Kelvin. "If cousins may not kiss, who may?"

"Oh, don't think that I object to your kissing each other!" cried the old lady. "That sort of medicine might do you more good than any other."

"By Jove, now, I never thought of that!" cried Kelvin, with a laugh. "Only, in the present case, it was altogether a one-sided affair. It was not Olive who was kissing me, but I who was kissing Olive."

These were the last words that Olive heard, as, with face aflame, she rushed from the room; but what had just happened was enough to fill her with strange, rapturous thoughts, and to strengthen hopes that were beginning to droop and grow faint for want of sustenance. Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte. The ice was broken; the first step was taken; everything else would follow in due course.

No after allusion was made either by Matthew or his mother to the scene just described, but Olive flattered herself by imagining that there was a warmth, a significance, in her cousin's manner now, such as she had never noticed before. If he would but speak; if he would but breathe one word to which she could pin her faith—that she could treasure up even as a half promise that he would make her his wife—from that very day his illness should begin to leave him! But at present she dare not falter in the course she had laid down for herself. Were he to recover suddenly now, all thoughts of her and her services would be quickly swept from his mind by the inrush of the hopes, cares, pleasures, and anxieties of everyday life, which the floodgates of sickness had for a time partially shut out. Every additional day that kept him helpless in her hands was so much gain to her hopes. The more deeply he continued to feel the need of her and her services, the more likely was his gratitude to lead him by imperceptible degrees into the easy pathway of love. If he had not loved her a little he would hardly have kissed her as he did. Let him but seal those kisses with a word, and from that moment the breath of returning life should fill his nostrils; while no man should ever have a wife more tender and devoted than she would be to him. How bitterly it made her heart ache to see him lying there in pain, which she alone could relieve but dare not—to see him wasting day by day into a haggard, gaunt-eyed skeleton of his former self—no one but herself could ever more than

faintly imagine. "If he were to die, I should poison myself an hour after. But he won't do that. Suddenly, some day, the scales will fall from his eyes, and he will know that he loves me and that I love him; and that love shall bring him back to life and health from the verge of the grave itself!"

Pod Piper was a frequent visitor in his master's sick-room. Whenever Mr. Kelvin felt himself a little better, he would send for Pod and dictate sundry instructions, chiefly replies to some of his many correspondents, which that young gentleman would take down in shorthand, to be copied out afterwards in the office downstairs. Of course there were times when it was requisite that Mr. Bray, the head-clerk, should see his employer in person; but as he happened to be slightly afflicted with deafness, the labour of talking to him was sometimes too much for Mr. Kelvin, so he dispensed as much as possible with the necessity of seeing him. To Olive Deane it seemed far better that if anyone must see her cousin frequently on matters of business, that person should be a simple country lad, the chief occupation of whose mind probably was to wonder what he should have for dinner, rather than that quietly observant Mr. Bray, who seemed to see so much and to say so little. So to Pod she was always coldly gracious, and when he had finished with Mr. Kelvin upstairs, he generally found a piece of bread and jam, or a slice of cake, or an orange, on the hall-table, put there for him by Olive herself. Whatever the article might be, it made no difference to Pod: he treated them all with the strict impartiality of a hungry lad: but his private opinion with regard to Miss Deane was not modified one iota thereby. He could not forget the scene between her and Mr. Pomeroy; he could not forget the base plot of which he had overheard the details, and of which his favourite, Miss Lloyd, was to be the victim. "She's a snake in the grass, if ever there was one," Pod would often remark confidentially to himself, even while in the very act of munching the bread and jam which Miss Deane had prepared for him.

"Doesn't the governor seem to have got fond of her all of a sudden!" remarked Pod parenthetically to himself, one day, as he was marching slowly downstairs from the sick man's room. "Nobody else must wait upon him, or even be near him. It's disgusting!"

There was a splendid orange waiting for him on the hall-table this morning. He took it with him to his den to enjoy in secret; but all the time he was sucking the orange, his thoughts were with his master and Miss Deane. "How close she sticks to him! Seems as if she couldn't even bear the old lady to go near him. What a funny thing it is he don't get better! I don't believe Dr. Druce, who's no better than an old woman, knows a bit what's the matter with him. I've seen him two or three times when he's had one of his bad attacks on him, and I'm blessed if I don't have a jaw with Dr. Whitaker about it. *He's* something like a doctor."

The Dr. Whitaker alluded to by Pod was a young practitioner who had been settled in Pembridge some five or six years. Some professional difference of opinion had arisen between him and Dr. Druce over a case to which they had both been called in, and the older man no longer recognised the younger when they passed each other in the street, or even spoke of him otherwise than in a tone of polite contempt: all of which in no wise troubled Dr. Whitaker, who plodded his way through life with a kind word and a pleasant smile for everybody—even including old Dr. Druce.

Kelvin and he had met several times at the houses of mutual friends, and had learned to know and like each other; and when the former was taken ill, Dr. Whitaker was the man he would have liked to attend him; but he knew that to have breathed such a wish to his mother would almost have broken her heart, so firmly did she pin her faith to Dr. Druce.

If there was one thing that easy-going Dr. Whitaker detested more than another, it was having to make out his own bills. In order to obviate this disagreeable necessity, he had taken of late to employing Pod Piper as his secretary. Pod wrote a capital hand for a youngster, and was only too well pleased to be able to earn a few shillings now and again by working after office-hours. Everybody in Pembridge knew of Mr. Kelvin's illness by this time, and Dr. Whitaker seldom saw Pod without inquiring after him. Thus it was that Pod saw his way to bring under the notice of Dr. Whitaker easily, and as if in the course of ordinary conversation, that which he was growing anxious to tell him.

Accordingly, the next time Dr. Whitaker put his usual query, "How has the governor been to-day?" Pod was prepared to go more into detail than he had ever done before.

"Much the same as usual, sir, thank you," he answered. "But if I may make so bold as to say so, my opinion is that Dr. Druce is no better than an old woman. It's the liver, he says—nothing but the liver. If that's all that's the matter, why don't he cure it? Now, if master would only send for you, sir, I'm sure you would soon put him all right again."

"Piper," said Dr. Whitaker, as he leisurely proceeded to light a cigar, "Dr. Druce is one of the antiquities of Pembridge, and antiquities should always be respected. Oblige me by getting on with your work."

Dr. Whitaker went out, and was gone for upwards of an hour. When he got back, Pod was putting away his papers for the night. "He was dreadfully sick this morning when I was in the room," remarked Pod, quietly, as if there had been no hiatus in the conversation. "In fact, there's hardly a day passes that he isn't dreadfully sick. But of course it's all the liver."

"Ah, ah! He's often sick, is he?" And then Dr. Whitaker whistled a few bars below his breath. "Is his sickness accompanied or followed by any particular pain, or any peculiar sensation, do you know?" he said, in a minute or two.

It is not needful that Pod's answer should be set down here. It is sufficient to say that whatever it was it put a sudden end to the young doctor's careless mood. He lighted another cigar, and made Pod sit down opposite to him, and questioned him closely and minutely for upwards of half an hour; and when at last he let him go, it was with a caution not to say a word to anyone about their interview. "Watch closely, and tell me everything," he said. "To-day is Tuesday; you will come to me at seven on Thursday evening. Contrive to be as much with your master during the interval as you can be without exciting suspicion, and note particularly those points which I have specified."

Fortune favoured Pod next morning more than he would have dared to expect. He was called up, as usual, to take down Mr. Kelvin's notes in shorthand. Kelvin, this morning, seemed feebler than usual, and was obliged to pause several times while dictating his instructions. He had got about half-way through the morning's letters, when Miss Deane came in with a cup of tea in her hand. "Take a little of this, Matthew," she said. "It will help to revive you."

He was sitting up in bed propped up with pillows. He took the tea and sipped at it. "It's a little too hot," he said. "I will drink it presently."

Olive was in the act of putting the cup and saucer on the little table which stood close to her cousin's hand, when there came a hurried knocking at the room door, and next moment the head of one of the servants was intruded into the room. "Oh, if you please, Miss," said the girl, "Mrs. Kelvin has met with a little accident. She slipped just now as she was coming downstairs. I don't think she's much hurt, but she wants you to go at once."

Leaving the cup and saucer on the little table, Olive hurried from the room. "Send me up word, Olive, as soon as you can, whether anything serious is the matter," her cousin said to her as she was going.

He was evidently anxious. "We will leave the papers for a little while, Piper," he said, presently. "We shall have some news from downstairs before long." Then he took the tea and drank a little of it. "I don't know how it is," he said, more as if speaking to himself than addressing Pod, "but of late everything seems to have such a queer taste."

The cup was still in his fingers when Olive opened the door.

"There's nothing to alarm you, Matthew," she said; "nothing serious the matter. Aunt missed the bottom stair as she was coming down.

She is a little shaken—nothing worse. If you don't want me just now I will go and sit with her for a little while."

"Go, by all means. Piper and I have not quite finished," said Kelvin. "I am very glad indeed that nothing more serious is the matter."

Olive left the room, and Kelvin put the cup and saucer back on the table. Then he took up a long letter which he had partly read before, and Pod expected he was going to finish it; but, after reading a few lines, he paused as though considering some point in his mind. He was still holding the letter, still evidently thinking about it, when, by-and-by, he shut his eyes. Pod thought that he had shut them in order to think out more clearly the case before him: perhaps he had. But in the course of two or three minutes the hand that held the letter relaxed its grasp, and Mr. Kelvin's low, regular breathing indicated that he was asleep.

Pod Piper had been sitting very quietly all this time, thinking chiefly of what Dr. Whitaker had been talking about last evening. Now that his master was asleep, there was nothing to hinder him from taking a long look at him, and tears came into the lad's eyes as he gazed at the hollow-eyed, sunken-cheeked wreck before him. "If this is her doing—if her hand has done this—she must be a daughter of the devil himself!" muttered Pod.

He never could tell afterwards what prompted the thought to enter his mind, but all at once, while gazing at the sleeping man, his face flushed, his eyes brightened, and he rose nervously from his chair. Yes: the breakfast-cup was on the little table, and still three-parts filled with tea. On another table near the door were a couple of empty physic-bottles, put there for the servant to take away. Pod's mind was made up in a moment. Another glance at the sleeper convinced him that there was no present fear from that quarter. Stepping lightly and on tiptoe, he went round the foot of the bed to the other side. Then he took the cup of tea and crossed the room with it to the table on which the empty bottles were standing. One of these bottles he uncorked, and into it, with the loss of a few drops only, he dexterously contrived to pour the tea. Then he recorked the bottle, hid it carefully away in his pocket, and put back the cup on to the little table. That done, he quietly resumed his seat by the sleeping man.

Five minutes later, Miss Deane came into the room. Pod warned her by a gesture that Mr. Kelvin was asleep. She stood gazing at him for a moment, and then she glanced across at the tea-cup. "Did he drink his tea before going to sleep?" she whispered to Pod.

"Yes—every drop of it," answered Pod, without a moment's hesitation.

She took up the cup and saucer and one or two other things, and moved towards the door. Then she took up the empty bottle, and then she looked round as if searching for the other one. Pod was fur-

tively watching her, and his heart came into his mouth. She stood for a moment as if in doubt, but not being quite sure, apparently, whether there had been one bottle or two, she made no remark, but went out of the room as quietly as she had come in.

In ten minutes she was back again. Kelvin was still asleep. "I think there is no need for you to wait any longer," she whispered to Pod. "Mr. Kelvin may sleep for an hour, or even longer. Should he want you when he awakes, I will send for you."

So Pod went, and very thankful he was to get away. When the dinner-hour came, he rushed off at once to Dr. Whitaker's, and telling that gentleman what he had done, left the bottle with him.

Twenty-four hours later, Dr. Whitaker handed a sealed letter to Pod, with instructions to give the same privately into the hands of Mr. Kelvin at the first possible opportunity. That opportunity came next morning, when Miss Deane left the room for a few minutes while her cousin was dictating his letters to Pod. The moment the door was shut behind her, Pod, who had been on the watch, passed the letter into the hands of Mr. Kelvin. "You must read this in private, please, before Miss Deane comes back into the room."

Kelvin looked at the lad, but broke the seal without comment. Then glancing at the signature, "From Whitaker!" he said. "What on earth can he have to write to me about?"

Dr. Whitaker's letter ran as under:

"My dear Kelvin,—I need not tell you that I have been truly grieved to hear of your long illness, as I do not doubt that you would be grieved were I in the same unfortunate predicament. As your clerk, young Piper, is frequently employed by me of an evening in making out my accounts, I have been enabled to question him pretty closely as to the progress and symptoms of your complaint. As a professional man, such details are never without interest for me, more especially where one of my friends is concerned. Certain things which Piper has told me of late (in answer to my questioning) have set me thinking very seriously.

"I have a certain delicacy in writing to you as I am writing now. Druce and I, as you are well aware, are by no means the best of friends. He looks upon me as a juvenile who has hardly learnt the A B C of his profession—as a believer in new-fangled notions such as the world had never heard of when he was young; and, finally, he holds me in most general contempt. He is quite welcome to his opinion of me. I may have mine about him, only I keep it to myself. In such a state of affairs, for me to interfere, either verbally or by writing, with one of his patients, is a professional crime for which nothing less than hanging, drawing, and quartering ought to be punishment sufficient. Indeed, I may tell you, that unless the occasion had seemed to me a very serious

one indeed, no such interference on my part would have taken place. But were I to go to Dr. Druce and tell him what I have reason to think about your case, how should I be received?

"As it happens, there is no need to answer this question. I am not going to Druce. I am going to put him aside, and, breaking through all the rules of professional etiquette, to communicate with you direct.

"My dear Kelvin, I have heard enough from Piper about your case both to puzzle and alarm me. Yours is certainly no ordinary liver complaint. I may tell you that much at once. What else it may be, I am hardly prepared as yet to say—or even to hint. But if you have any regard for my words, or any belief in my knowledge, you will do what I ask you, and do it without hesitation or delay.

"What I want you to do is this: To send to me by Piper, in a bottle sealed by your own hand, about half a pint of whatever liquid may be brought you to drink after you have read this letter—it matters little whether it be tea, barley-water, toast-and-water, or anything else. Do this unknown to anyone but Piper, who will at once bring me the bottle and contents. Whisper no word to anyone as to what you have done, and ask Piper no questions. He may be trusted implicitly, but of the details he knows nothing. Till you hear from me again, which will probably be to-morrow evening, take as little liquid as possible, and eat nothing but plain biscuits and dry toast. A little weak brandy-and-water will do you no harm, but either mix it yourself or see it mixed. Be sure that I am not asking you to do all this without a reason, and a very powerful one too. Above all things—*silence and secrecy*. Burn this as soon as read, and believe me,

"Your sincere friend,

"Cyrus Whitaker."

"Burn this letter," said Kelvin to Pod, when he had read it through twice. When he had seen it shrivelled into ashes, he lay back on his pillows, thinking, and neither stirred nor spoke till Miss Deane came into the room, some quarter of an hour afterwards.

"Olive," he said, but without turning his eyes towards her, "I feel more thirsty than usual this morning. If you have any barley-water ready-made, I should like you to get me some."

She smiled, and went without a word. Five minutes later, she came back with a small jug and a glass. "Will you take a little of it now?" she asked.

"Yes, just a little, and then you can put the things on the table within reach." After she had given him a little of the barley-water, he said, "Piper and I have rather a heavy lot of papers to wade through this morning, so, while we are finishing them, I wish you would just step round to the library and get me that book of travels we were

talking about last night; or, if that one is not at home, some other: you know the sort I like."

As soon as Olive had left the room, Kelvin turned to Pod. "You have got a bottle in your pocket, I suppose?" he said.

"Yes, sir."

"Then pour that barley-water into it, and cork it up tightly."

When this was done, Pod lighted a taper, and Kelvin sealed up the bottle with his own trembling fingers, and stamped it with the monogram of his ring. Then the bottle went back into Pod's pocket.

"No more business to-day," said the sick man, wearily. "Take those papers back to Mr. Bray, and tell him to do the best he can with them. As for yourself, you will go at once to Dr. Whitaker, and give that bottle into his own hands. I suppose I may rely upon your fidelity and discretion in this matter, eh?"

"You may do that, sir, with perfect confidence," said Pod, with much earnestness.

"Yes, I think you are true and honest," said Kelvin, slowly, with his eyes fixed full on the boy's open face. Then, as Pod went out, he added to himself: "That letter of Whitaker's has instilled such a horrible suspicion into my mind, that I no longer know whom or what to believe."

Next morning, Pod smuggled another letter into the hands of his master. It was very brief, but very much to the purpose.

"My dear Kelvin,—I must see you as quickly as possible, and in *private*. Your restoration to health, nay, your life itself, may depend on this. *No one* must know of my visit except Piper; and you must let me know through him when you can arrange to have me admitted to your room without any of your household being aware of my visit. Not a word to anyone. Burn this. Yours ever,

"C. W."

For fully half an hour Matthew Kelvin remained buried in thought after reading this letter. Then he said to Pod: "Instead of Mr. Bray signing the letters this afternoon, you will bring them upstairs to be signed by me."

At five o'clock, up came Pod with the letters. Kelvin was sitting up in his easy-chair by this time, and it struck Pod that he looked brighter and better than he had seen him look for some time past. When the letters were signed, and Pod was about to go, Kelvin put into his hand a sealed envelope. "Give this to Dr. Whitaker, and be sure that he has it to-night."

Inside the envelope was a scrap of paper, on which were written these words:

"To-morrow morning at half-past eleven. M. K."

CHAPTER XXVII.

VAN DUREN'S DREAM.

MAX VAN DUREN'S stay on the Continent, instead of lasting for four or five days only, extended to nearly a fortnight. During the whole of this time, Jonas Pringle remained in charge of the premises in Spur Alley. At any other time, the sudden departure of Byrne and his daughter, taken in conjunction with what else Pringle either knew or suspected, would have formed food sufficient for many an hour's restless pondering; for it was a matter of principle with Pringle to suspect everybody and everything. But at present his own affairs were quite enough to occupy his thoughts. He had been waiting patiently, week after week, for an occasion to arise which should call Van Duren from home, and so give him an opportunity of bringing to a climax a certain hidden scheme at which he had been patiently working for upwards of a year. The wished-for opportunity was now here, but the advantage he had intended to derive from it seemed as utterly beyond his reach as before. In other words, the key at which he had laboured so long and so patiently, and which, he had fondly hoped, needed but a few more touches of the file to bring it to perfection, still refused—obstinately and maliciously refused, to open the lock of Van Duren's safe. And rarely could there have been a more opportune time to open it than the present. There were notes and gold in it to the amount of two thousand pounds, as Pringle knew full well. If he could only have obtained possession of these notes and this gold within a few hours of Van Duren's departure for Paris, he would have had time to change the notes and get three or four days' clear start before the faintest suspicion that there was anything wrong could have got abroad. It was for this that he had been biding his time so long; it was for this that he had put up with Van Duren's hard words and starvation salary. He had promised himself all along that he would have a day of glorious revenge; that at one bold sweep he would make himself master of enough, if judiciously invested, to secure for himself a comfortable little income for life. But all his delicate manipulation with the file, all his final touches, had hitherto proved ineffective and of no avail. The wards of the lock that held the iron door stubbornly refused to be coaxed; the Open Sesame was not yet found. Pringle was terribly chagrined. Still he never allowed himself to altogether despair. He felt that success was only a matter of time; but he would not have cared for success to come at a moment when there might chance to be little or nothing to reward his labours: he was anxious that it should come now, when the reward would be great. But Van Duren could not stay away for ever, and one afternoon brought the long-expected

telegram, announcing that he might be looked for in Spur Alley before bed-time next night.

"Curse him for coming back so soon!" said Pringle to himself, as he tore the telegram to shreds. "If he had only stayed away another day or two, I should have got my key to fit and open the lock. It may be months before he goes out of town again. It may be months before there's as much money in the safe again as there is now. But it's just like my luck!"

Mr. Van Duren reached home about ten o'clock next evening. Pringle was there to receive him, and while Mrs. Bakewell was getting supper ready, the two men went into the discussion of sundry business details. But not more than ten minutes had passed before Van Duren, changing the subject, suddenly said: "By-the-by, I have not made any inquiry after my lodgers. How is Mr. Byrne?—Better, I hope. And Miss Byrne, is she quite well?"

There was a deep longing in his heart to see Miriam again. She had promised to give him a definite yes or no immediately after his return, and he flattered himself that if he read the signs aright, he had little or nothing to fear. He had brought back with him several expensive presents for Miriam. Never in his life before had he bought presents for anybody, his natural instincts being those of a miser; and it was not without a sharp pang that he had brought himself, even in the present instance, to part from his dearly-loved money. These presents had been in his thoughts all the way coming home. He would spread them out before Miriam, and watch her unfold them from the wrappers one by one; and in imagination he saw the sparkle in her eyes and the smile on her lips as she clasped the bracelet on her wrist, or posed before the glass while trying the effect of the new ear-rings. Then, before the freshness and surprise had time to evaporate, he would take her hand and press it passionately to his lips, and implore her to give him her answer once for all. If she condescended to accept his presents, how could he doubt what that answer would be? They would be married before summer was over; and when once Miriam was his wife, he would know how to bend her will to his—know how to teach her what was best for her comfort and his—from his own point of view.

His first look from the cab, when he got in sight of the house, had been to the windows of his lodgers' sitting-room. But all was dark there, and his heart had chilled a little at the sight. It was almost too early for them to have gone to bed: probably they had gone out somewhere to spend the evening. He had secretly flattered himself that Miriam would be there to welcome him—that the least she could do would be to open the door of her sitting-room, ready to greet him with a smile and a pressure of the hand as he went upstairs to his own part of the house. But no Miriam was there to-night, evidently; and then the

thought struck him that perhaps no one had told her of his expected return. This thought was not without its consolation; so, hiding his impatience under his usual impassive demeanour, he went indoors as if nothing were amiss, and not till he and Pringle had been talking together for ten minutes, did he seem to recollect the existence of any such persons as Mr. Byrne and his daughter.

Pringle had been expecting the question for some time, and was ready with his answer.

"Mr. Byrne and Miss Byrne went away together in a cab two or three days after you left home."

"Went away together in a cab!" cried Van Duren. "But at least they left word where they were going, and when they might be expected back?"

"Miss Byrne said they were going to the seaside for the benefit of the old gentleman's health; but there was nothing said about when they might be expected back."

"Strange—very strange!" muttered Van Duren. Some presage of coming evil seemed to touch him already. He looked from side to side of the ill-lighted room, and shuddered. Pringle was watching him narrowly.

"Did they take much luggage with them?" he asked.

"I heard Mrs. Bakewell say that there was nothing left in their rooms but the bare furniture."

"Have any letters been received here for them since they left?"

"Not one, sir."

"How was it you did not send me word, either by telegram or letter, when you discovered that they were going away?"

"Because I was under the impression that they had told you before you went out of town, that they were going away."

This was not true, but it was necessary that Pringle should excuse himself somehow.

"But did nobody ask them when they might be expected back?"

"Yes; Mrs. Bakewell did. Miss Byrne's answer was that everything depended on the state of the old gentleman's health, and that they might be away only a week, or they might be away a month."

"I would give twenty pounds this very minute to know where they are gone to!" cried Van Duren, emphatically, as he pushed away his chair, and began to pace the room with restless strides.

Pringle sat watching him for a minute or two. That Van Duren was terribly chagrined, he could see plainly enough, and it pleased him to see it. The question with him now was, should he, or should he not tell Van Duren that he knew to what place his lodgers were gone? On the one hand, to keep Van Duren in ignorance of what he, Pringle, knew, would be a source of great gratification to him. But, on the other hand, if he were to reveal what he knew, was there not a faint

probability that Van Duren might go in search of them—might leave him alone in the house for a few days longer, and so afford him another opportunity for making himself master of the treasure in the iron safe? This latter thought decided him.

"I can tell you where Mr. and Miss Byrne are gone to, sir," he said, speaking very quietly, "and I won't charge you twenty pounds for the information, either."

"Where are they gone?" asked Van Duren, abruptly, as he brought his walk to a sudden stand.

"Their luggage was labelled for Marhyddoc, in North Wales."

Jonas Pringle certainly never anticipated the effect which his words would have on Max Van Duren. The latter seemed like a man suddenly turned to stone. All the colour fled from his face, his lips turned blue, while into his eyes there came an expression of unspeakable terror. For a few minutes he stood like a man who neither knew where he was nor what he was doing, who had no thought for anything in the wide world but the terrible news he had just heard. Then he put out a hand, and seemed to be feeling for a chair, without knowing what he was about. Pringle took his arm and guided him to a seat.

"A sudden spasm—nothing more," he said. "I shall be better presently."

"Shall I get you a glass of water?" asked Pringle.

Van Duren shook his head. "I have been taken like this once or twice lately," he stammered. "I must talk to my doctor about it."

Mrs. Bakewell came in to lay the cloth for supper. This seemed to rouse him. "I shall not want any supper: I've changed my mind. You need not bring it in," he said. Then turning to Pringle, "To what place did you say that Mr. Byrne and his daughter were gone?" he asked.

"To Marhyddoc, in North Wales."

"Some little fishing or bathing place, I suppose—quiet and salubrious, suitable for an old man like Mr. Byrne. Strange, though, that they never told me they were going. You don't know, Pringle, do you, what their particular reason might be for choosing Marhyddoc, out of all places in the world?"

"I don't know that, sir; they gave no hint on that point," said Pringle. "But I know this for a fact, that old Mr. Byrne was no more deaf than you or me, sir; that his long white hair was nothing but a wig, and his hump nothing but a sham; and that when he liked he could be as active on his feet as any gentleman of fifty or fifty-five can be."

Max Van Duren sat and stared at his clerk like a man thoroughly stupified. "How do you know all this?" he said, speaking in a low, hoarse voice.

"Because I've seen it with my own eyes," answered Pringle. Then he told him all about the Euston Square episode.

"But what possible object could Mr. Byrne have in disguising himself in the way you mention? and what could be his motive in trying to deceive me?"

"Don't know, sir, I'm sure. But mightn't it all be a plant—a try-on—to get something out of you, either money or information, or something else?"

"They got no money out of me—not a single penny," answered Van Duren. "And as for information ——" In a moment it flashed across his mind that Miriam Byrne had indeed got certain information out of him, which information seemed to connect itself, in some mysterious way, with the journey to Wales. Would she and her father ever have gone to any such out-of-the-way place as Marhyddoc, if he had not told Miriam the story of the shipwreck? But even in that case, what possible object could be gained by their visit to Marhyddoc? The key to the great secret of his life lay there at the bottom of the sea, as far beyond their reach, even supposing them to have known of its existence, as it was beyond his. After all, it was perhaps nothing more than a singular coincidence that had taken them to that particular spot in Wales. Could it be that Miriam had grown to take so deep an interest in him that she wanted to see the very place where he had been shipwrecked? This was a thought that made his heart beat wildly for a moment or two; but it was quickly succeeded by a feeling of deadly apprehension. What Pringle had told him about Byrne and his disguise, smote him with a sense of some hidden danger which he could not overcome. Why had Miriam pressed him so earnestly to give her all the details of the shipwreck? And why had they said nothing to him of their contemplated journey before he left home? He could not shake off the feeling that he was in the midst of some great peril. It was quite out of the question that he should sit quietly down in Spur Alley, and have no knowledge of what was happening in Wales. Even at that moment, what terrible events might be taking place on which his fate might hang as on a thread! And yet, again, how was it possible that any harm could happen to him having its origin in what he had told Miriam? He had simply told her that he had lost a box containing the whole of his worldly possessions; but he had given no hint as to the special contents of the box. How was she or her father to connect the Max Van Duren of to-day with the Max Jacoby of twenty years ago? And even granting that they knew his secret so far, there would not, even in that case, be the slightest link to connect him with the murder of Paul Stilling. But more than all else was he rendered uneasy by the fact of Byrne's disguise. There was something in that which he altogether failed to comprehend. He questioned Pringle again and again as to what he had seen at Euston Square, but with no other result than to add a more positive confirmation to what he had been told at first.

"Pringle, I shall go down to Marhyddoc by the next fast train."

"There is one at ten in the morning, sir."

"That will suit me. Mr. Byrne and I have sundry business transactions together which necessitate my seeing him as soon as possible. I need not tell you how annoyed I am to find that he has gone away without leaving a message of any kind for me."

He paused and looked at his watch. "I am terribly tired, and I must try to get a few hours' sleep before starting. You are a light sleeper, I know, and I will trust to you to call me at six."

"All right, sir."

"You may also see Mrs. Bakewell for me, and arrange for breakfast at eight. You had better sleep here to-night, and I will go through the remaining letters with you during breakfast."

Then, without another word, he left the room and marched slowly upstairs to bed.

Van Duren had spoken no more than the truth when he said that he was terribly tired. He had been travelling continuously for eighteen hours, and was thoroughly worn out. The news told him by Pringle had taken away whatever appetite he might otherwise have had, while leaving the need of some refreshment strongly upon him. He was never without cognac in his bedroom. Of this he now took a powerful dose, and then flinging himself upon the bed, dressed as he was, in three minutes he was fast asleep.

While sleeping thus, he had a dream—a dream more strangely vivid, more realistic in all its details, than any that he had ever had before.

In this dream he himself was as it were an impersonal being, the spectator of a drama in which he was called upon to play no part. The scene of the drama in question was the bottom of the sea. Through the green and limpid twilight, the floor, covered with sand and shells, and huge smooth-washed boulders, could be seen stretching away on every side till lost in the dim distance. Fishes of various kinds, some such as are never seen by mortal eye, swam silently to and fro in the liquid depths. The middle distance of the scene was filled up with a huge mass of wreckage and broken timber. There was no need to tell the dreamer of what good ship the wreck was now before him. Even in his sleep, his lips murmured, "That is the *Albatross*." In and out of the broken bulks, and rotting portholes, and shattered hatchways, strange monsters of the sea, big and little, kept crawling continually.

But presently there was a quick, frightened movement among the fishes, and the dreamer beheld descending slowly from unknown heights a ladder made of stout rope and weighted heavily at the bottom. In a little while the weights touched the ground, and the ladder became stationary and firm. Soon there could be seen, coming

down slowly and heedfully, a man in the full costume of a diver, and looking in it no unfit companion for the strange creatures whose haunts he had for a little while invaded. In a few minutes he was joined by another man similarly attired. Together the two men bent their steps towards the wreck. There was no need to tell the dreamer what they were there to look for. Would they find it, or would they not? But in his impersonality he had no further interest in having this question answered than a spectator at a play might have; indeed, so slightly was he interested, that he laughed aloud more than once as he watched the strange, awkward movements of the two men as they clambered around and about the wreck.

Round and about, in and out, they moved without any apparent success. Evidently, the object they had come in search of was not to be found. At length, as if by mutual consent, they walked back to the ladder. One of them had got his foot on the lowermost rung, when his mate touched him on the shoulder and pointed back to the wreck. The sleeper's eyes followed the direction of the man's finger, and saw there—what? The spectral figure of a man standing on the broken bulwarks of the ship, and pointing downwards with outstretched finger to a heap of rotting timber and loose wreckage at its feet. The figure was diaphanous; the broken stump of a mast in front of which it was standing could be clearly seen through it. It seemed to have a wavering motion, very slight, but still perceptible, like that of a flame which quivers by the intensity of its own heat. Although its finger pointed downwards, the face of the figure was bent full on the face of the sleeping man—the same face that he had seen in the glass, haggard, deathlike, with a thin line of black moustache; while its black, inscrutable eyes gazed down through his eyes into his very soul. There was no laughter, no cynicism left in the dreamer now—nothing but an unspeakable horror that stirred his hair and chilled the beating of his heart even while he slept. He could not turn away his eyes from those other eyes that were staring into his; but for all that he could see, as we do see in dreams, everything that was going on around him. He could see the men moving slowly back towards the wreck, in obedience to the invitation of the spectre, of whom they seemed to have no dread. He could see them searching and turning over the heap of mouldering débris at which the finger was so persistently pointed, and presently he could see them drag from the midst of it a small square oaken box, the silver clamps of which were all tarnished and black with the action of the sea. How well he remembered that box! what cause he had to remember it!

Carrying the box carefully for fear lest it should fall to pieces, one of the men brought it presently to the foot of the ladder, close to which, let down from the heights above, hung a cord with a hook at the end of it. To this hook the box was now fastened by one of the

men, then a tug was given to the cord, and next moment the box began slowly to ascend, drawn up by unseen hands above.

The finger of the spectre now pointed upward. Soon the box was lost to view, and as it disappeared, the twilight of the scene seemed to darken and deepen, and the water to lose somewhat of its limpid clearness. It was as though night were reaching down with its hand of blackness to the bottom of the sea. Slowly but surely the whole scene grew blurred and indistinct, as though one filmy veil of darkness after another were being drawn between it and the dreamer's eyes, till at length the familiar walls of the dreamer's bedroom began to grow out of the darkness, and Max Van Duren knew that he was awake, and that the dawn of another day was beginning to broaden in the east. From head to foot he was bathed in perspiration, and he was trembling in every limb. He sat up on the bed and gazed timidly around, as half expecting to see the eyes of the spectre staring at him from some dim corner of the room; but presently he heard a welcome footstep on the stairs outside, and then came the voice of Pringle, telling him that it was time to get up.

(*To be continued.*)

LOVE AND DEATH.

WHEN the end comes, and we must say good-bye
And I am going to the quiet land;
And sitting in some loved place hand in hand,
For the last time together, you and I,
We watch the winds blow, and the sunlight lie
About the spaces of our garden home,
Soft by the washing of the western foam,
Where we have lived and loved in days past by:
We must not weep, my darling, or upbraid
The quiet Death who comes to part us twain;
But know that parting would not be such pain
Had not our love a perfect flower been made.
And we shall find it in God's garden laid
On that sweet day wherein we meet again.

VICTOR HUGO.

TO glance at the early years of a great man, and try and see in the childhood and opening circumstances of his life any of the traces of that genius afterwards so splendidly disclosed, must always present some attraction to every intelligent mind. There are few lives which began amid scenes of greater excitement, and often of personal danger, than the life of Victor Hugo. His father, Joseph Leopold Sigisbert, a distinguished officer in the revolutionary wars, entered the army as a cadet, in 1788, at the age of fourteen. During the war in La Vendée, Major Hugo, Victor's father, was frequently obliged to visit Nantes; and it was during one of these visits that he first became acquainted with an armourer, named Trébuchet: a Royalist and a Catholic.

The armourer, a widower, had three daughters, one of whom, Sophie, had only half imbibed her father's opinions: and her devotion to the throne for some time proved rather an obstacle to her friendship with the Major. He was, it is said, gentle and kind to women and children, as well as humane in war; and, besides all this, he was "a fine tall youth, well made, full of life," with a countenance expressive of goodness—the best of all beauty. As for Sophie, she was small and thin, with tiny hands and feet; extremely intelligent-looking, and very lively.

Such were the parents of the future novelist. But as the bridegroom elect was unable to visit Nantes, the lady herself came to Paris, attended by her father and brothers. The marriage of the young couple took place at the registry office at the Town Hall, without any religious ceremony. The churches were all closed at that time, and the priests had all fled or were concealed.

If we now pass over two or three years, we shall find Hugo and his wife quartered at Besançon, the parents of two children, Abel and Eugène, and shortly expecting the birth of a third, which they hoped would be a daughter, but which turned out to be a son, and was called Victor. He was so ugly, said his mother, and was so unlike a human being, that their fine boy, Eugène, who was only eighteen months old, and could hardly speak, cried out when he saw him, "Oh! what a little animal." But though he made so poor an entrance upon the scene, the infant was not destined to pass away thus unheard-of and be forgotten. Greater things were in store for him, and he soon began to mend, so that in six months' time he was bravely undertaking the fatiguing journey from Besançon to Marseilles.

The next time we hear of him is in a letter from the Major to his

mother, who was living in Burgundy. The poor husband, about to set out for Spain, at the request of his patron, Joseph, now become king of that country, mourns over his separation from his wife and children, who were on their way to Paris to be educated, until Spain was sufficiently quiet to receive them. He thus speaks of the youngest: "Victor exhibits a great inclination for study. He is as steady as his eldest brother, and very thoughtful. He speaks little and always to the purpose. His remarks have often struck me. He has a very sweet face."

We cannot linger over the time spent in Paris, and, indeed, there is nothing of any interest to record. The time came, at the beginning of the year 1811, when Madame Hugo was to make preparations to join her husband with her children in Spain. A convoy would leave Bayonne in the Spring, and of this she took immediate steps to avail herself. The escort consisted of 1500 infantry, 500 cavalry, and four guns. Instead of the diligence, which had carried Madame Hugo to Bayonne, an enormous old-fashioned coach took its place, such as is now only to be seen in pictures. This awful machine afterwards nearly proved the destruction of the whole family. On leaving Maedraga, the slope was such that they lost sight of the mules; the whole weight of the carriage fell upon the unfortunate animals, and overpowered them. The pressure was too strong, and the two foremost mules slipped over the precipice, dragging everything after them. Nothing could have saved them, had not a milestone stopped one of the wheels, but only for a moment, and then gave way. Had not the Grenadiers thrown themselves down the steep, at the peril of their lives, and helped to support the milestone with their shoulders and chests, both mother and children must certainly have been lost.

Nor were their troubles ended when they got to Madrid. Here, General Hugo was unable to meet them, owing to the duties of his office as inspector; but the party were lodged in great state in the Masserano Palace. But to set against all the grandeur of the furniture, gilding, and sculpture, was the terrible multitude of insects, which overwhelmed everything. Yet notwithstanding, Victor and his brothers enjoyed themselves to their hearts' content. They were never tired of wandering through the vast halls and drawing-rooms, and throwing water from the fountains at each other's faces. The picture-gallery was a favourite retreat with Victor, and he would often gaze on the haughty bearing of departed Spaniards till they stirred up the imagination of the future author of "Hernani," and planted the seed whence sprang the well-known scene of Don Ruy Gomez.

The arrival of the father, however, at last put an end to these pleasant days, and introduced our young hero to the gloomy secrets of a Spanish college. The vast building was nearly empty when he and his brother entered, and the reception which they met with from the monk

who presented himself, was anything but reassuring. He was about fifty years of age, with a nose like a raven's beak, and sunken eyes. He was a picture of leanness and pallor, his body and face were immovable, his muscles had lost all their elasticity, and seemed to have become ossified, and he was called Don Basilio. The other monk, who had the teaching of the pupils, was just the reverse in appearance. Don Manuel was as burly as Don Basilio was lean: jovial, fat, smiling, vivacious. Besides these two monks, there was a wonderful hump-backed man, with a red face and matted hair, clothed in red woollen waistcoat, a pair of plush breeches, and yellow stockings, whose duty it was to awake the students at five o'clock in the morning. Perhaps Corcovita was not altogether absent from his imagination when he created the deformed dwarf, Quasimodo.

At the beginning of the year 1812, French affairs became so bad in Spain that General Hugo sent his wife and two younger children back to France. Abel, the eldest son, who was one of the king's pages, stayed with his father for some time longer; but after Wellington's battles at Rodrigo and Badajoz, he also thought it time to depart. When the General at last arrived at Paris and again met his family, his proceedings could not have altogether met with the approval of the boys, for he sent them at once to school.

Here they remained three years, during which time great events were passing around them on every side. France had been invaded, the Bourbons restored, and the 100 days terminated by the great defeat at Waterloo. At this time, 1815, Victor was thirteen years of age, and was already the author of a vast quantity of poetry. It was at M. Deotte's school that Victor's passion for versification first declared itself. During these three years (1815–18) he made every possible kind of verse—odes, satires, tragedies, idylls, imitations of Ossian, and translations from Virgil and Horace, to say nothing of a poem of 500 verses, entitled "The Deluge." All these treasures of genius the child-poet loved to recite to his mother. Indeed, she appears in every page; he never allows her fête, or the first day of the New Year to pass without addressing some lines to her; and it is she who takes the leading place in his affections, rather than his father. It was his mother's side in politics to which he turned during his youthful years. His royalism was the Voltairean royalism of his mother—the throne without the altar. A sceptic herself, Madame Hugo seems to have done all in her power to make her children follow her steps. She would send them to her bookseller and let them rummage his library and carry away what they pleased. Nothing came amiss to their fresh appetites, and there they became acquainted with the writings of Rousseau, Voltaire, and Diderot; for we are told that, in the judgment of this most foolish woman, "books had never yet done anybody any harm."

But we hasten to mention what was certainly the greatest triumph of

Victor's youthful years. In 1817, the subject proposed by the Academy for the prize of poetry was the following—"The happiness derived from study to every situation of life." Though only fifteen years old, the boy was ambitious enough to compete, and having finished his poem, he escaped from school, accompanied by a friend who was in the secret. The porter saw two wild-looking beings enter his lodge, who asked him as to where the office of the Secretary of the French Academy was situated. Having found it, and mustered courage to enter, they beheld, solemnly seated before a desk covered with papers, a white-headed and formidable individual, into whose hands Victor placed his verses and his letter. After undergoing the usual amount of alternate hopes and fears, the Academy paid the boy-author the high compliment of mentioning his poem with honour.

During the early years of his life, as we have seen, Victor Hugo was a Royalist, for he associated with no one but his mother. Of his father, the general, he saw less than ever: he only came twice or thrice a year to Paris for a brief visit of a day or two, and then he sometimes left without seeing his family. Husband and wife had got used to living apart, and, at last, their own wish, as much as necessity, kept them asunder. For these reasons, the father's opinions were not much regarded by his son; the time had not yet come when the once defender of kings should develop into the author of "Les Misérables," but longer intercourse with the world at last dispelled the visions of youth, and his father's words were in the end fulfilled,—"Let us leave all to time. The child shares his mother's views; the man will have the opinions of his father."

The rather sudden death of his mother, which happened on the 27th of June, 1821, in many respects acted upon the mind of Victor Hugo. Victor's life at this period must have been restless and unsettled. Already in love, and wishing to get married, he was almost destitute of anything to be called an income. He had 700 francs, and on this he existed for a year. He kept house with a young cousin of his who had come from Nantes to study the law. The keeping house, however, turns out to be only a figure of speech for hiring together a garret in two compartments: one of these they turned into a drawing-room; the other part was an ill-lighted alcove, which held the two beds with some difficulty. In this humble style Victor and his cousin got along famously—they were fast friends—and even received visitors who often came to talk about theatrical affairs. Once a week young Hugo would call at the War Office to see the object of his affections; for M. Foucher would not allow of his coming oftener whilst his marriage was so unlikely to take place. But Madame Foucher, we are told, with the interest ladies generally take in bringing young people together, rather tempered the paternal severity by often walking with her daughter in the gardens of the Luxembourg, and sanctioning the meetings in that place.

Up to this time Hugo had published his odes one by one, either in a paper or as pamphlets; but now he was advised to make a complete book of them. To do this, however, was not so easy: it would require money, and he had none to spare. When at last this difficulty was overcome, a bookseller had to be found who would undertake the sale of it. Fortunately, an uncle of one of his brother Abel's friends consented to give the book a place in his shop-window. The volume had not been exposed a quarter of an hour before it was purchased by M. Mennechet, reader to Louis XVIII. This was indeed a piece of good fortune, for the King was so pleased with the book that he not only had the "Odes" read to him, but took them himself and made notes in them with his own hand. And now the book sold so well that the first edition was exhausted in four months, leaving the author the sum of 750 francs, to which the King added a pension of 1000 more out of his own privy purse. On this small income the happy couple deemed it possible to marry; everyone was willing to give consent, and everyone said kind things of Victor. The ceremony was performed at St. Sulpice, in the same chapel where, eighteen months before, his mother's corpse was interred. Another Madame Hugo now knelt where the bier had rested, and her white veil took the place of the funeral drapery.

General Hugo, who was unable to be present at his son's marriage, was soon afterwards kept in Paris for some time by the sad illness of his second son, Eugène, who had suddenly become quite insane. From this time till his own death, which was most sudden, the general's interviews with his family were of the most affectionate character. Victor had but to see his father to know him at once. As the hoar frost melts in the heat of the sun, so did the bitterness the son entertained towards his father melt away.

Hugo now began to turn his mind resolutely to the drama, and wrote a play called "Cromwell," which he published together with a preface longer than the tragedy itself. The success of "Der Freischütz" had given Paris a taste for dramatic novelties, and after Weber came Shakespeare. The representations of these great works filled him with feelings of enthusiasm, and led him to carry out with greater boldness the anti-classical opinions he has expressed in the preface to "Cromwell." We cannot stop to enter into all the disputes which this work introduced; neither is it necessary to attempt it, as everyone is aware of the hostility of the French classical school to what it considered the barbarism of the romantic. All Victor's genius lay in the direction of this latter style, and all his dramas, from "Hernani" to "Ruy Blas," have been written agreeably to these ideas. The public, wearied of always hearing the same kind of tragedy, with its long speeches and want of interest, willingly gave itself up to the charms of this new school, which has ever since held its place, and still remains the general favourite.

It was not till after the appearance of "Hernani" that Victor Hugo

wrote any of his more celebrated romances. When selling the "Dernier Jour d'un Condamné," he had also sold the publisher a novel which he was thinking of writing, and which should be called "Notre Dame de Paris." He had engaged to have it ready in April, 1829. A year had passed beyond the proper time, and not a line was written; at last the publisher got angry, and at once demanded the fulfilment of the treaty. Thus compelled to set to work, Hugo determined to lose no time. But the political eruption which suddenly broke out on the 29th July compelled him to move from his house in the Champs Elysées to the residence of his brother-in-law, during which operation he lost a valuable note-book which was absolutely necessary to the completion of Notre Dame. On the ground of this misfortune he persuaded his publisher to allow him five months longer. He then invested in a bottle of ink and a thick piece of grey worsted knitting which covered him all over; he even locked up his clothes to avoid the temptation of going out, and set to work as if in a prison. At first he was melancholy, but after writing a few chapters this feeling disappeared: he felt neither cold nor fatigue, and during the whole time took but one holiday, to hear the trial of Charles the Tenth's ministers, and then he put on the uniform of the National Guards, rather than release his clothes from their imprisonment. By means of this constant labour the book was finished in the appointed time; the bottle of ink was also at an end; the last drop of the one terminating the last word of the other; so that for a moment he thought of changing the title of the work and calling it the "Contents of a Bottle of Ink."

After finishing this work, in which his object was to give a representation of Paris in the fifteenth century, and of the fifteenth century in relation to Paris, without aiming at any historical pretensions, he at one time thought of composing another romance to describe the feudal aspect of the Middle Ages, as Notre Dame had painted the sacerdotal. This plan, however, was never accomplished, and the "Misérables" was the first novel which was actually published since "Notre Dame de Paris," after an interval of more than thirty years.

We cannot continue this sketch much further, nor is it to his political life that the admirers of Victor Hugo would wish to turn. Made a peer of France in 1845, by Louis Philippe, he showed no disposition to abandon the radical views with which his later works abound. These reached their height in the Revolution of 1848, when M. Hugo was elected one of the Members of the city of Paris. All these fluctuations of opinion, which seem to Englishmen so strange, ended in his banishment from France on the occasion of the coup d'état, in December, 1852. Since that time, we believe the distinguished exile lived in Guernsey till the last revolution, ending in the overthrow of the Emperor Napoleon III., again set him at liberty to return to his native country.

Whatever may have been the occupation of his mind during the long interval which elapsed between the appearance of "Notre Dame" and the "Misérables," the subsequent period of his literary career since 1862 has not been passed in repose. During this time three fresh romances have been added to the two which preceded. "Les Travailleurs de la Mer" ought perhaps to be classed with the two former, forming as they do a sort of trilogy; the object of the author being, as he himself somewhere informs the reader, to "denounce" in "Notre Dame de Paris" the evil effects of a foolish and inflexible superstition. Hugo's intention in "Les Misérables" was to show the terror exerted over the individual by law and social exigency. In "Les Travailleurs de la Mer," the object is to show man in opposition to the elements, the last form of external force that is brought against him. Here again the moral lesson and the skill of the artist are brought together and wonderfully contrived. The sea is everywhere present, forming a clear, sharply-defined background; while Gilliat, calm upon the reef of rocks, presents a sad picture of human industry opposed to forces too mighty to be resisted. The object of the fourth romance is to turn into ridicule the aristocratic principle as it exists in England. "L' Homme qui Rit" is the first book in which M. Hugo has spoken of England, or rather, taken this country as the scene of his story. Here he is certainly not so successful. The picture which he has drawn of this nation in the reign of Queen Anne is so full of mistakes as almost to drive from our minds, when reading the work, the many and great beauties it contains. The story is altogether ghastly and unpleasant, hardly redeemed by the one strain of tenderness running through it, the love of Dea for the Monster. Victor Hugo's last production is called "Quatre Vingt Treize," and is founded on the French revolutionary war in '93. In this his latest work the peculiarities of his genius are more manifest than ever. There is the same exaggeration, the same conscious aiming at effect, blended with scenes of the most powerful interest and the most touching pathos.

It will be seen from the brief summary we have just given of these great romances that they are composed with reference to some *moral*; yet we should be quite wrong to infer from this that the books themselves are anything like English novels with a purpose. In all these works the *moral* element is so worked into the substance of the narrative, that one would be spoilt if the other were removed. Doubtless they contain many faults and failures in matters of taste; *politics* are too frequently introduced, and arguments on social subjects, which sometimes, if not positively absurd, are, to say the least, very uninteresting. But after making every deduction, no one will deny the fact that of his time Victor Hugo is the greatest living French writer of fiction.

E. B.

CHANDLER AND CHANDLER.

STANDING at right angles between North Crabb and South Crabb, and from two to three miles distant, was a place called Islip. A large village or small town, as you might please to regard it; and which has not a railroad as yet.

Years and years before my days, one Thomas Chandler, who had served his articles to a lawyer in Worcester, set up in practice for himself at Islip. At the same time another lawyer, one John Paul, also set up at Islip. The two had no wish to rival one another; but each had made his arrangements, and neither of them would give way. Islip felt itself suddenly elevated to pride, now that it could boast of two established lawyers, when until then it had not possessed one, but concluded that both of them would come to grief in less than a twelvemonth. At the twelvemonth's end, however, each was bearing steadily onwards, and had procured one or two valuable land agencies; in addition to the legal practice, which, as yet, was not much. So they kept themselves afloat: and if they had sometimes to eat bread-and-cheese for dinner, it was nothing to Islip.

In the second or third year, Mr. Chandler took his brother Jacob, who had qualified for a solicitor, into the office; and subsequently made him a partner, giving him a full half share. Islip thought it was an extravagantly-generous thing of Mr. Chandler to do, and told him he had better be careful. And, after that, the years went on, and the Chandlers flourished. The business, what with the land agencies and other things, increased so much that it required better offices: and so Mr. Chandler, who had always lived on the premises, moved into a larger and a handsomer house some doors further up the street. Jacob Chandler had a pretty little place called North Villa, just outside Crabb, and walked to and fro night and morning. Both were married and had children. Their only sister, Mary Ann Chandler, had married a farmer in Gloucestershire, Stephen Cramp. Upon his death, a year or two afterwards, she came back and settled herself in a small farm near Islip, where she hoped to get along, having been left but poorly off. And that is enough of explanation.

I was but a little shaver, but I remember the commotion well. We were staying for the autumn at Crabb Cot; and, one afternoon, I, with Tod and the Squire, found myself on the Islip road. I suppose we were going for a walk; perhaps to Islip; but I know nothing about that. All in a moment we saw a gig coming along at a frightful pace. The horse had run away.

"Here, you boys, get out of harm's way!" cried the Squire, and bundled us over the fence into the field. "Bless my heart and mind, it is Chandler!" he added, as the gig drew nearer. "Chandler and his brother!"

Mr. Chandler was driving: we could see that as the gig flew past. He was a tall, strong man; and, perched up on the driving-cushion, looked like a giant compared with Jacob, who seemed no bigger than a shrimp beside him. Mr. Chandler's face wore its usual healthy colour, and he appeared to retain all his presence of mind. Jacob sat holding on to the driving-cushion with his right hand and to the gig-wing with the left, and was just as white as a sheet.

"Dear me, dear me, I hope and trust there will be no accident!" groaned the Squire. "I hope Chandler will be able to hold in the horse!"

Hs set off back to North Crabb at nearly as fleet a pace as the horse, Tod after him, and I as fast as my small legs would take me. At the first turning we saw what had happened, for there was a group lying in the road, and people from the village were running up to it.

The horse had dashed at the bank, and turned them over. He was not hurt, the wretched animal. Jacob stood shivering in the highway, quitte pour la peur, as the French say; Mr. Chandler lay in a heap.

Jacob's house was within a stone's throw, and they carried Mr. Chandler to it on a hurdle, and sent for Cole. The Squire went in with the rest; Tod and I sat on the opposite stile and waited. And if I am able to tell you what passed within the doors, it is owing to the Squire's having been there and staying to the end. No need was there for Cole to tell Thomas Chandler that the end was at hand: he knew it himself. There remained no hope for him: no hope. Some complicated injury had been done him inwardly, through that fiend of a horse trampling on him; and neither Cole nor all the doctors in the world could save him.

He was carried into one of the parlours and laid upon a mattress, hastily placed upon the carpet. Somebody got another gig and drove fiercely off to fetch his wife and son from Islip. He had two sons only, Thomas and George. Thomas, sixteen years old now, was in the office, articled to his father; George was at school, too far off to be sent for. Mrs. Chandler was soon with him. She had been a farmer's daughter, and was a meek, patient kind of a woman, who gave you the idea of never having a will of her own. The office clerks went posting about Islip to find Tom; he having been out when the gig and messenger arrived.

It chanced that Jacob Chandler's wife had gone abroad that day, taking her daughters; so the house was empty, save for the two maid-servants. The afternoon wore on. Cole had done what he could (which was nothing), and was now waiting in the other parlour with the

clergyman; who had also done all that was left to do. The Squire stayed in the room; Chandler seemed to wish it; they had always liked one another. Mrs. Chandler knelt by the mattress, holding the dying hand: Jacob stood leaning against the book-case with folded arms and looking the very picture of misery: the Squire sat on the other side, nursing his knees.

"There's no time to alter my will, Betsey," panted poor Chandler, who could only speak by snatches: "and I don't know that I should alter it if I had the time. It was made when the two lads were little ones. Everything is left to you without reserve. I know I can trust you to do a mother's part by them."

"Always," responded Mrs. Chandler meekly, the silent tears rolling down her cheeks.

"You will have enough for comfort. Thoughts have crossed me at times of making a fortune for you and the lads: I was working on and laying by to do it. How little we can foresee the future!—God alone knows what that will be, and shapes it out. Not a day, not a day can we call our own: I see it now. With your own little income, and the interest of what I have been able to put by, you can live. There will also be money paid to you yearly from the practice——"

He was stopped by want of breath. Could not go on.

"Do not trouble yourself to think of these things," she said, catching up a sob, for she did not want to give way before him. "We shall have quite plenty. As much as I wish for."

"And when Tom is out of his articles he will take my place, you know, and will be well provided for and help you," said Mr. Chandler, taking up the word again. "And George you must both of you see to. If he has set his heart upon being a farmer instead of a clergyman, as I wished, why let him be one. 'If you are a clergyman, Georgy, you will always be regarded as a gentleman,' I said to him the other day when he was at home, telling me he wanted to be a farmer. But now that I am going, Betsey, I see how valueless these distinctions are. Provided a man does his duty in the world and fears God, it hardly matters what his occupation in it is. It is for so short a time. Why, it seems but only the other day that I was a boy, and now my few poor years are over, and I am going into the never-ending ages of immortality!"

"It shall all be as you wish, Thomas," she whispered.

"Ay," he answered. "Jacob, come here."

Jacob let his arms drop, and left the book-case to stand close over his brother. Mr. Chandler lifted his right hand, and Jacob stooped and took it.

"When we drew up our articles of partnership, Jacob, a clause was inserted, that upon the death of either of us, the survivor should pay a hundred and fifty pounds a year out of the practice to those the other

should leave behind him, provided the business could afford it. You remember that?"

"Yes," said Jacob. "I wish it had been me to go instead of you, Thomas."

"The business will afford it well, as you know, and more than afford it: you might well double it, Jacob. But I suppose you will have to take an additional clerk in my place, some efficient man, and he must be paid. So we will let it be at the hundred and fifty, Jacob. Pay that sum to my wife regularly."

"To be sure I will," said Jacob.

"And when Tom shall be of age he must take my place, you know, and draw his full half share. *That* was always an understood thing between you and me, Jacob, if I were taken. Your own son will, I suppose, be coming in shortly: so that in later years, when you shall have followed me to a better world, the old firm will be perpetuated in them—Chandler and Chandler. Tom and Valentine will divide the profits equally, as we have divided them."

"To be sure," said Jacob.

"Yes, yes; my mind is at rest on the score of worldly things. I would that all dying men could be as much at ease. God bless and prosper you, Jacob! You'll give a fatherly eye over Tom and George in my place, and lead them in straightforward paths."

"That I will," said Jacob. "I wish with all my heart this dreadful day's work had never happened!"

"And so will I too," put in the Squire. "I'll look a bit after your two boys myself, Chandler."

Mr. Chandler, drawing his hand from his brother, held it towards the Squire. At that moment, a suppressed stir was heard outside, and an eager voice. Tom had arrived: having run all the way from Islip.

"Where's papa?—where's he lying? Is he hurt very much?"

Cole appeared, marshalling him in. A well-grown young fellow for sixteen, with dark eyes, a fresh colour, and a good-natured face; altogether, the image of his father. Cole took a look down at the mattress, and saw how very much nearer something was at hand than it had been only a few minutes before.

"Hush, Tom," he said, hastily pouring some drops into half a wine-glass of water. "Gently, lad. Let me give him this."

Poor Tom Chandler, aghast at what he beheld, was too much frightened to speak. A sudden stillness fell upon him, and he knelt down by the side of his mother. Cole's drops did no good. There could be only a few last words.

"I never thought it would end thus—that I should not have time granted me for even a last farewell," spoke the dying man in a faint voice and with a gasp between every word, as he took Tom's hand. "Tom, my boy, I cannot say to you what I would."

Tom gave a great burst as though he were choking, and was still the next minute.

"Do your duty, my boy, before God and man with all the best strength that heaven gives you. You must some time lie as I am lying, Tom; it may be with as little warning of it as I have had: at the best, this life will last such a little while as compared with life eternal. Fear God; find your Saviour; love and serve your fellow creatures. Make up your accounts with your conscience morning and evening. And—Tom ——"

"Yes, father; yes, father?" spoke poor Tom, entreatingly, as the voice died away, and he was afraid that the last words were dying away too and would never be spoken.

"Take care of your mother and be dutiful to her. And do you and George be loving brothers to each other always: tell him I enjoined it with my closing breath. Poor George! if I could but see him! And —and—and ——"

"Yes, oh yes, I will; I will indeed! What else, father?"

But there was nothing else. Just two or three faint words as death came in, and a final gasp to close them.

"God be with you ever, Tom!"

That was all. And the only other thing I recollect (save the fit of crying I had when they told us he was dead) was seeing the sister, Mrs. Cramp, come up in a yellow chaise from the Bell at Islip, and pass into the house, as we sat on the gate. But she was just too late.

You may be sure that the affair caused a commotion. So grave a calamity had never happened at North Crabb. Mr. Chandler and his brother had started from Islip in their gig to look at some land that was going to be valued, which lay a mile or two on the other side Crabb on the Worcester road. They had driven the horse a twelvemonth and never had any trouble with him. It was supposed that something must have been wrong with the harness. Any way, he had started, kicked, backed, and finally run away.

I saw the funeral: standing with Tod in the churchyard amidst many other spectators, and reading the inscriptions on the grave-stones while we waited. Mr. Chandler had been taken back to his house at Islip, and was brought from thence to Crabb to be buried. Tom and George Chandler came in the first mourning-coach with their Uncle Jacob and his son Valentine. In the next sat two other relatives, with the Squire and Mr. Cole.

Changes followed. Mrs. Chandler left the house at Islip, and Jacob Chandler and his family moved into it. She took a pretty cottage at North Crabb, and Tom walked to the office of a morning and home again at night. Valentine, Jacob's only son, was removed from school at once to be articled to his father. He was fifteen, just a year younger than Tom.

II.

Years passed on. Tom grew to be four-and-twenty, Valentine three-and-twenty. Both of them were good-looking young men, tall and straight; but Tom had the pleasanter face, address, and manners. Everybody liked him. Crabb had thought when Tom attained his majority, and got his certificate as a solicitor, that his uncle would have taken him into partnership. The Squire had said it publicly. Instead of that, old Jacob gave him a hundred a year salary to start with, and said to him, "Now we shall go on comfortably, Tom." Tom, who was anything but exacting, supposed his uncle wished him to add a year or two to his age and some more experience, before taking him in. So he thanked old Jacob for the hundred a year, and was contented.

George Chandler had emigrated to Canada. Which rather gave his mother a turn. Some people they knew had gone out there, purchased land, and were doing first-rate on it; and George resolved to follow them. George had been placed with a good farmer in Gloucestershire and learnt farming thoroughly. That accomplished, he began to talk to his mother about his prospects. What he would have liked was, to take a farm on his own account. But he had no money to stock it, and his mother had none to give him. Her income, including the hundred and fifty paid to her from the business, was about four hundred pounds, all told: home living and her sons' expenses had taken it all, leaving no surplus. "There's nothing for me but going to Canada, mother," said George: "I don't see any opening for me in England. I shall be sure to get on, over there. I am healthy and steady and industrious; and those are the qualities that make way in a new country. If the worst comes to the worst, and I do not succeed, I can but come back again." His arguments prevailed at length, and he sailed for Canada, their friends over there promising to receive and help him.

All this while Jacob Chandler had flourished. His practice had gradually increased, and he had become a great man. Great in show and expense. It was not his fault; it was that of his family: of his own will, he would never have put a foot forward out of his plain old groove. Mrs. Jacob Chandler, empty-headed, vain, and pretty, had but two thoughts in the world: the one to make her way amid fashionable people, the other to marry her daughters well. Originally a small tradesman's daughter in Birmingham, she was now ridiculously upstart, and put on more airs and graces in an hour than a lady born and bred would in a lifetime. Mrs. Jacob Chandler's people had sold brushes and brooms, soap and pickles: she had occasionally stood behind the counter and served out the soap with her own hands; and Mrs. Jacob now looked down upon Birmingham itself and everybody in it.

North Villa had not been given up, though they did move to Islip. Jacob Chandler held a long lease of it, and he sub-let it for three or four years. At the end of that period it occurred to Mrs. Jacob that she should like to keep it for herself, as a sort of country house to retire to at will. As she was the grey mare, this was done; though Jacob grumbled. So North Villa was furbished up, and some new furniture put into it; and the garden, a very nice one, improved: and Mrs. Jacob, with one or other or all three of her daughters, might be frequently seen driving her pony carriage with its handsome ponies between North Villa and Islip, streamers flying, ribbons fluttering: you would have taken it for a rainbow coming along. The girls were not bad-looking, played and sang with open windows loud enough to frighten the passers-by, and were given to speak to one another in French at table. "Voulez-vouz donner-moi la sel, Clementina?" "Voulez-vous passer-moi le moutarde, Georgiana?" "Voulez-vous envoyer-moi les poivre, Julietta?" For, as Mrs. Jacob would have told you, they had learnt French at school; and to converse in it was of course only natural to themselves, and most instructive to any visitor who might chance to be present. Added to these advantages Mrs. and the Miss Chandlers adored dress, their out-of-door toilettes being grander than a queen's.

All this: the two houses and the company received in them; the ponies and the groom; the milliners' bills and the dressmakers', made a hole in Jacob Chandler's purse. Not too much of a hole in one sense of the word; Jacob took care of that: but it prevented him from putting by all the money he wished. He made plenty of it: more than the world supposed.

In this manner matters had gone on since the departure of George Chandler for Canada. Mrs. Chandler living quietly in her home making it a happy one for her son Tom, and treasuring George's letters from over the sea: Mrs. Jacob Chandler and her daughters keeping the place alive; Valentine getting to be a very fine gentleman indeed; old Jacob sticking to business and pocketing his gains. The first interruption came in the shape of a misfortune for Mrs. Chandler. She lost a good portion of her money through a calamity that you have heard of before—the bursting-up of Clement Pell. It left her with very little, save the hundred and fifty pounds a year paid to her regularly by Jacob. Added to this was the hundred a year Tom earned, and which his uncle had not increased. And this brings us down to the present time, when Tom was four-and-twenty.

Jacob Chandler sat one morning in his own room at his office, when a clerk came in and said Mrs. Chandler from Crabb was asking to see him. Cordiality had always subsisted between the two families, though they were not much together; Mrs. Chandler disliking their show; Mrs. Jacob and her daughters intensely despising one who wore black

silk for best, and generally made her puddings with her own fingers. "So low-lived, you know, my dears," Mrs. Jacob would say, with a toss of her bedecked head.

Jacob heard his clerk's announcement with annoyance; the lines on his brow grew deeper. He had always been a shrimp of a man, but he looked like a shrivelled one now. His black clothes sat loosely upon him; his white neckcloth, for he dressed like a parson, seemed too large for his thin neck.

"Mrs. Chandler can come in," said he, after a few moments' hesitation. "But say I am busy."

She came in, putting back her veil: she had worn a plain-shaped bonnet with a white border ever since her husband died. It suited her meek, kind, and somewhat homely face, on which the brown hair, streaked with grey, was banded.

"Jacob, I am sorry to disturb you, especially as you are busy; but I have wanted to speak to you for some time now and have not liked to come," she began, taking the chair that stood near the table at which he sat. "It is about Tom."

"What about him?" asked Jacob. "Has he been up to any mischief?"

"Mischief! Tom! Why, Jacob, I hardly think there can be such another young man as he, for steadiness and good conduct; and, I may say, for kindness. I have never heard anything against him. What I want to ask you is, when you think of making a change?"

"A change?" echoed Jacob, as if the words puzzled him, biting away at the feather of his pen. "A change?"

"Is it not time that he should be taken into the business? I—I thought—and Tom I know also thought, Jacob—that you would have done it when he was twenty-one."

"Oh, did you?" returned Jacob, civilly.

"He is twenty-four, you know, now, Jacob, and naturally wishes to get forward in life. I am anxious that he should; and I think it is time—forgive me for saying it, Jacob—that something was settled."

"I was thinking of raising Tom's salary," coolly observed Jacob; "of giving him, say, fifty pounds a year more. Valentine has been bothering me to do the same by him; so I suppose I must."

The fixed colour on Mrs. Chandler's thin cheeks grew a shade deeper. "But, Jacob, it was his father's wish, you know, that he should be taken into partnership, should succeed to his own share of the business; and I thought you would have arranged it ere this. An increase of salary is not the thing at all: it is not that that is in question."

"Nothing can be so bad for a young man as to make him his own master too early," cried Jacob. "I've known it ruin many a one."

"You promised my husband when he was dying that it should be so," she gently urged. "Besides, it is Tom's right. I understood that

when he was of a proper age, he was to come in, in accordance with a previous arrangement made between you and poor Thomas."

Jacob bit the end of the pen right off and nearly swallowed it. "Thomas left all things in my hands," said he, coughing and choking. "Tom must acquire some further experience yet."

"When do you propose settling it, then? How long will it be first?"

"Well that depends, you know. I shall see."

"Will it be in another year? Tom will be five-and-twenty then."

"Ay, he will: and Val four-and-twenty. How time flies! It seems but the other day that they were in jackets and trousers."

"But will it be then—in another year? You have not answered me, Jacob."

"And I can't answer you," returned Jacob. "How can I? Don't you understand me when I say I must wait and see?"

"You surely will do what is right, Jacob?"

"Well now, can you doubt it, Betsey? Of course I shall. When did you hear from George?"

Mrs. Chandler rose, obliged to be satisfied. To urgently press any interest of her own was not in her nature. As she shook hands with Jacob she was struck with the sickly appearance of his face.

"Are you feeling quite well, Jacob? You look but poorly."

"I have felt anything but well for a long time," he replied, in a fretful tone. "I don't know what ails me: too much work, perhaps: but I seem to have strength for nothing."

"You should give yourself a rest, Jacob, and take some bark."

"Ay. Good day."

Now it came to pass that in turning out of the house, after nodding to Tom and Valentine, who sat at a desk side by side in the room to the left, the door of which stood open, Mrs. Chandler saw the Squire on the opposite side of the street, and crossed over to him. He asked her in a joking way whether she had been in to get six shillings and eightpennyworth of law. She told him what she had been in for, seeing no reason for concealing it.

"Bless me, yes!" cried he, in his impulsive way. "I'm sure it's quite time Tom was in the firm. I'll go and talk to Jacob."

And when he got in—making straight across the street with the words, and through the passage, and so to the room without halt or ceremony—he saw Jacob leaning back in his chair, his hands thrust into his black side-pockets, and his head bent on his chest in deep thought. The Squire noticed how deep the lines in his brow had got, just as Mrs. Chandler had.

"But you know, Jacob Chandler, that it was an agreement with the dead," urged the Squire, in his eagerness, after listening to some plausible (and shuffling) remarks from Jacob.

"An agreement with the dead!" repeated Jacob, looking up at the

Squire for explanation. They were both standing on the matting near the fender: which was filled with an untidy mass of torn and twisted scraps of paper. "What do you mean, Squire? I never knew before that the dead could make an agreement."

"You know what I mean," cried the Squire, hotly. "Poor Thomas was close upon death at the time you and he had the conversation: he wanted but two or three minutes of it."

"Oh, ah, yes; that's true enough, so far as it goes, Squire," replied Jacob, pulling up his white cravat as if his throat felt cold.

"Well," argued the Squire. "Did not you and he agree that Tom was to come in when he was twenty-one? Both of you seemed to imply that there existed a previous understanding to that effect."

"There never was a word said about his coming in when he was twenty-one," contended Jacob.

"Why, bless my heart and mind, do you suppose my ears were shut, Jacob Chandler?" retorted the Squire, beginning to rub his head with his red silk handkerchief. "I heard the words."

"No, Squire. Think a bit."

Jacob spoke so calmly that the Squire began to rub up his memory as well as his head. He had no cause to suppose Jacob Chandler to be other than an honourable man.

"'When Tom shall be of age, he must take my place:' those were I think the very words," repeated the Squire. "I can see your poor brother's face now as he lay down on the floor and spoke them. It had death in it."

"Yes, it had death in it," acquiesced Jacob, in a tone of discomfort. "What he said was this, Squire: 'When Tom shall be of an age.' Meaning of course a suitable age to justify the step."

"I don't think so: I did not hear it so," persisted the Squire. "There was no 'an' in it. 'When Tom shall be of age:' that was it. Meaning when he should be twenty-one."

"Oh dear, no; quite a mistake. You can't think my ears would deceive me at such a time as that, Mr. Todhetley. And about our own business too."

"Well, you ought to know best of course, though my impression is that you are wrong," conceded the Squire. "Put it that it was as you say: don't you think Tom Chandler is now quite old enough for it to be acted upon?"

"No, I don't," replied Jacob. "As I have just told his mother, nothing can be more pernicious for a young man than to be made his own master too early. Nine young fellows out of every ten would get ruined by it."

"Do you think so?" asked the Squire, dubiously.

"I am sure so, Squire. Tom Chandler is steady now, for aught I know to the contrary; but just let him get the reins into his hands,

and you'd see what it would be. That is, what it might be. And I am not going to risk it."

"He is as steady-going a young man as anybody could wish for; diligent, straightforward. Not at all given to spend money improperly."

"Because he has not had it to spend. I have known many a young blade to be quiet and cautious while his pockets were empty; and as soon as they were filled, perhaps all at once, he has gone headlong to rack and ruin. How do we know that it would not be the case with Tom?"

"Well, I—I don't think it would be," said the Squire, with hesitation, for he was coming round to Jacob's line of argument.

"But I can't act upon 'thinking,' Squire; I must be sure. Tom will just stay on with me at present as he is; so there's an end of it. His salary is going to be raised: and I—I consider that he is very well off."

"Well, perhaps he'll be none the worse for a little longer spell of clerkship," repeated the Squire, coming wholly round. "And now good morning. I'm rather in a hurry to-day, but I thought it right to put in a word for Tom's sake, as I was present when poor Thomas died."

"Good morning, Mr. Todhetley," answered Jacob, as he sat down to his desk again.

But he did not get to work. He bent his head on his neckcloth as before, and set on to think. What had just passed did not please him at all: for Jacob Chandler was not devoid of conscience; though it was an elastic one, and he was in the habit of deadening it at will. It was not his intention to take his nephew into partnership at all; then or later. Almost ever since the day of his brother's funeral he had looked at matters after his own fashion, and soon got to think that Tom had no manner of right to a share in the business; that as Thomas was dead and gone, it was all his, and ought to be all his. He and Thomas had shared it between them: therefore it was only just and proper that he, the survivor, should take it. That's how Jacob Chandler, who was the essence of covetousness, had been reasoning, and his mind was made up.

It was therefore very unpleasant to be pounced upon in this way by two people in one morning. Their application as regarded Tom himself would not have troubled him: he knew how to put disputants off civilly, saying neither yes nor no, and promising nothing: but what annoyed him was the reminiscence they had called up of his dying brother. Jacob intended to get safely into the world above, some day, by hook or by crook; he went to church regularly, and considered himself a model of good behaviour. But these troublesome visitors had somehow contrived to put before his conscience the fact that he might be committing a life-long act of injustice on Tom; and that, to do so, was not the readiest way of getting to heaven.—Was that twelve o'clock? How the morning had passed!

"Uncle Jacob, I am going over to Brooklands about that lease. Have you any particular instructions to give me?"

It was Tom himself who had entered. A tall, good-looking, fresh-coloured young man, who had honesty and kindliness written on every line of his open face.

Jacob lifted his bent head, and drew his chair nearer his table as if he meant to set to work in earnest. But his mouth took a cross look.

"Who told *you* to go? I said Valentine was to go."

"Valentine has stepped out. He asked me to go for him."

"Where has he stepped to?"

"He did not say," replied Tom, evasively. For he knew quite well where Valentine was gone: to the Bell inn over the way. Valentine went to the Bell a little too much, and was a little too fond of the Bell's good liquor.

"I suppose you can go, then. No, I have no instructions: you know what to say as well as I do. We don't give way a jot, mind. Oh, and —Tom!" added Jacob, calling him back as he went out.

"Yes, sir."

"I am intending to raise your salary. From the beginning of next month, you will have a hundred and fifty a year."

"Oh, thank you. Thank you, Uncle Jacob."

Tom spoke as he in his ready good-nature felt—brightly and gratefully. Nevertheless, a shade of disappointment did cross his mind, for he thought his position in the house ought to be a different one.

"And I am *sure* it is quite as much as I ought to do for him," argued Jacob with his conscience. And he put away unpleasant prickings and set to work like a house on fire.

It was one o'clock when Valentine came in. He had an excuse ready for his father: the latter, turning out of the clerks' room, chanced to see him enter. "He had been down to Tyler's to see if he could get that money from them." It was an untruth, for he had stayed all the while at the Bell; and his father noticed that his face was uncommonly flushed. Old Jacob had had his suspicions before; yes, and spoken of them to Valentine: he now motioned him to go before him into the private room.

"You have been drinking, sir!"

"I!—good gracious, no," returned Valentine, boldly, his blue eyes fearlessly meeting his father's. "What fancies you do pick up!"

"Valentine, when I was your age I never drank a drop of anything till night, and then it was only a glass of table-beer with my supper. It seems to me that young men of the present day think they can drink at all hours with impunity."

"I don't drink, father."

"Very well. Take care you do not. It is a habit more easily acquired than left off. Look here: I am going to give you fifty

pounds a year more. Mind you *make it do:* and do not spend it in waste."

It was not very long after this that Jacob Chandler got a shock: a few months, or so. During that time he had been growing thinner and weaker, and looked so shrivelled up that there seemed to be nothing left of him. Islip, small place though it was, had a market-day—Friday;—when farmers would drive or walk in and congregate at the Bell. One afternoon, just as the ordinary was over, Jacob went to the inn, as was his general custom: he had always some business or other to transact with the farmers; or, if not, something to say. His visit to them over, he said good day and left: but the next minute he turned back, having forgotten something. Some words fell on his ear as he opened the door.

"Ay. He is not long for this world."

They were spoken by old Farmer Blake—a big, burly, kind-hearted man. And Jacob Chandler felt as certain that they were meant to apply to himself as though his name had been mentioned. He went into a cold shiver, and shut the door again without entering.

Was it true, he asked himself, as he walked slantwise across the street to his office: was it indeed a fact that he was slowly dying? A great fear fell upon him: a dread of death. What, leave all this beautiful sunshine, this bright world in which he was so busy, and pass into the cold dark grave! Jacob turned sick at the thought.

It was true that he had long been ailing; but not with any specific ailment. He could not deny that he was now more like a shadow than a man, or that every day seemed to bring him less of strength. Passing into his dining-parlour instead of into his private business room, he drank two glasses of wine off at once, and it seemed to revive him. He was a very abstemious man in general.

Well, if Farmer Blake did say it—stupid old idiot!—it was not obliged to be true, reflected Jacob then. People judged by his spareness: he wished he could get a little fatter. And so he reasoned and persuaded himself out of his fears, and grew sufficiently reassured to transact his business, always pressing on a Friday.

But that same evening, Jacob Chandler drove to North Villa in his gig, telling his wife he should sleep there for a week or two, for the sake of the fresh air. And the next morning, before he went to Islip, he sent for the doctor—Cole.

"People are saying you won't live!" repeated Cole, having listened to Jacob's confidential communication. "I don't see why you should not live. Let's examine you a bit. You should not take up fancies."

Cole could find nothing particular the matter with him. He recommended him rest from business, change of air, and a generous diet. "Try it for a month," said he.

"I can't try it—except the diet," returned Jacob. "It's all very

well for you to talk about rest from business, Cole, but how am I to take rest? My business could not get on without me. Business is a pleasure to me; it's not a pain."

"You want rest from it all the same," said Cole. "You have stuck closely to it this many a year."

"My mother died without apparent cause," said Jacob, dreamily. "She seemed just to drift out of life. About my age, too."

"That's no reason why you should," argued Cole.

Well, they went on, talking at one another; but nothing came of it. And Cole left, saying he would send him in some tonics to take.

By the evening it was known all over the place that Jacob Chandler was ill and had sent for Cole. People talked of it the next morning as they went to church. Jacob appeared, looking much as usual, and sat down in his pew. The next to come in was Mrs. Cramp; who walked over to our church sometimes. She stayed to dine with the Lexoms, and went to call at North Villa after dinner; finding Mrs. Jacob and the rest of them at dessert with a guest or two. Jacob was somewhere in the garden.

Mrs. Cramp found him in the latticed arbour, and sat down opposite to him, taking up her brown shot-silk gown, lest the seat should be dusty. When she told him it was the hearing of his illness which had brought her over to Crabb, he turned cross. He was not ill, he said; only a trifle out of sorts, as everybody else must be at times and seasons. By dint of questioning, Mrs. Cramp, who was a stout, comely woman, fond of having her own way, got out of him all Cole had said.

"And Cole is right, Jacob: it is rest and change you want," she remarked. "You are sure you do not need it? don't tell me. A stitch in time saves nine, remember."

"You know nothing about it, Mary Ann."

"I know that you look thinner and thinner every time I see you. Be wise in time, brother."

"Cole told me to go away to the seaside for a month. Why, what should I do, mooning for a whole month in a strange place by myself? I should be like a fish out of water."

"Take your wife and the girls."

"I daresay! They would only worry me with their fine doings. And look at the expense."

"I will go with you if you like, Jacob, rather than you should go alone, though it would be an inconvenience to me. And pay my own expenses."

"Mary Ann, I am not going at all; or thinking of it. It would be impossible for me to leave my business."

Mrs. Cramp, turning over matters in her mind, determined to put the case plainly before him, and did so; telling him that it would be

better to leave his business for a temporary period now, than to find shortly that he must leave it for ever. Jacob sat gazing out straight before him at the Malvern Hills, the chain of which lay against the sky in the distance.

"If you took my advice, brother, you would retire from business altogether. You have made enough to live without it, I suppose ——"

"But I have not made enough," he interrupted.

"Then you ought to have made it, Jacob."

"Oughts don't go for much."

"What I mean is, that you ought to have made it, judging by the style in which you live. Two houses, a carriage and ponies (besides your gig), expensive dress, parties: all that should never be gone into, brother, unless the *realized* income justifies it."

"It is the style we live in that has not let me put by, Mary Ann. I don't tell you I have put nothing by: I have put a little by year by year; but it is not enough to live upon."

"Then make arrangements for half the proceeds of the business to be given over to you. Let the two boys take to it, and ——"

"*Who?*" cried Jacob.

"The two boys, Tom and Valentine. It will be theirs some time, you know, Jacob: let them have it at once. Tom's name must be first, as it ought to be. Valentine ——"

"I have no intention of doing anything of the kind," interposed Jacob, sharply. "I shall keep the business in my own hands as long as I live. Perhaps I may take Valentine into it: not Tom."

Mrs. Cramp sat for a full minute staring at Jacob, her stout hands, from which the gloves had been taken, and her white lace ruffles lying composedly on her brown gown.

"Not take Tom into the business!" she repeated, in a slow, astonished tone. "Why, Jacob, what do you mean?"

"*That*," said Jacob. "Tom will stay on at a good salary; I shall increase it, I daresay, every two years, or so; but he will not come into the firm."

"You can't mean what you say."

"I have meant it this many a year past, Mary Ann. I have never intended to take him in."

"Jacob, beware! No luck ever comes of fraud."

"Of what? *Fraud?*"

"Yes; I say fraud. If you deprive Tom of the place that is justly his, it will be a cheat and a fraud, and nothing short of it."

"You have a queer way of looking at things, Mrs. Cramp. Who has kept the practice together all these years, but me? and added to it little by little, and made it worth double what it was; ay, and more than double? It is right—*right*, mind you, Mary Ann—that my own son should succeed to it."

"Who made the practice in the first place, and took you into it out of brotherly affection, and made you a full partner without your paying a farthing, and for seventeen or eighteen years was the chief prop and stay of it?" retorted Mrs. Cramp. "Why, poor Thomas; your elder brother. Who made him a promise when he was lying dying in that very parlour where your wife and children are now sitting, that Tom should take his proper place in the firm when he was of age, and his half share with it, according to agreement? Why you. You did, Jacob Chandler."

"That was all a mistake," said Jacob, shuffling his thin legs and wrists.

"I will leave you," said Mrs. Cramp. "I don't care to discuss questions while you are in this frame of mind. Is this all the benefit you got from the parson's sermon this morning, and the text he gave out before it? That text: think of it a bit, brother Jacob, and perhaps you'll see your way to act differently. Remember," she added, turning back to him for the last word, which she always got, somehow, "that cheating never prospers in the long run. It never does, Jacob; never: for where it is crafty cheating, hidden away from the sight of man, it is seen and noted by God."

Her brown skirts (all the shades of a copper tea-kettle) disappeared round the corner by the mulberry-tree, leaving Jacob very angry and uncomfortable. Angry with her, uncomfortable in himself. Do what he would, he could not get that text out of his mind—and what right had she to bring it cropping up to him in that inconvenient way, he wondered, or to speak to him about such matters at all. The verse was a beautiful verse in itself; he had always thought so; but it was not pleasant to be tormented by it—and all through Mary Ann! There it was haunting his memory again!

"Keep innocency, and take heed unto the thing that is right: for that shall bring a man peace at the last."

Jacob Chandler got to look a little fresher, though not stouter, as the weeks went on: the drive, night and morning, seemed to do him good. Meeting Cole one day, he told him he felt stronger, and did not see why he should not live to be ninety. With all his heart, Cole answered, but most people found seventy long enough.

All at once, without warning, a notice appeared in the local papers, stating that Jacob Chandler had taken his son Valentine into partnership. Mrs. Chandler read it as she sat at breakfast.

"What does it mean, Tom?" she asked.

"I don't know what it means, mother. We have heard nothing about it at the office."

"Tom, you may depend your uncle Jacob *has done it*, and that he does not intend to take you in at all," spoke Mrs. Chandler, in her strong conviction. "I shall go to him."

She finished her breakfast and went off there and then, catching Jacob just as he was turning out of the white gate at North Villa to mount his gig: for he still came over to Crabb to sleep. The newspaper was in her hand, and she pointed to the advertisement.

"What does it mean, Jacob?" she asked, just as she had a few minutes before asked of Tom.

"Mean!" said Jacob. "It can't have more than one meaning, can it? I've thought it best to let Val's name appear in the practice, and made over to him a small share of the profits. Very small, Betsey. He won't draw much more than he has been drawing as salary."

"But what of Tom?" questioned poor Mrs. Chandler.

"Of Tom? Well, what of him?"

"When is he to be taken in?"

"Oh, there's time enough for that. I can't make two moves at once; it could not be expected of me, Betsey. My son is my son, and he had to come in first."

"But—Jacob—don't you think you ought to carry out the agreement made with Tom's father—that you are bound in honour?" debated Mrs. Chandler, in her meek and non-insisting way.

"Time enough, Betsey. We shall see. And look there, my horse won't stand: he's always fresh in the morning."

Shaking her hand hastily, he stepped up, took the reins from the man, and was off in a trice, bowling along at a quicker pace than usual. The poor woman, left standing there and feeling half bewildered, saw Mrs. Jacob at one of the open windows, and crossed the lawn to speak.

"I came up about this announcement," she said. "It is so strange a thing; we can't understand it at all. Jacob should take Tom into partnership. Especially now that he has taken Valentine."

"Do you think so?" drawled Mrs. Jacob; who wore a pink top-knot and dirty morning wrapper, and minced her words more than usual, for she thought the more she minced them the finer she was. "Dear me! I'm sure I don't know anything about it. All well at home, I hope? I won't ask you in, for I'm going to be busy. My daughters are invited to a garden-party this afternoon, and I must give directions about the trimming of their dresses. Good morning."

Back went Mrs. Chandler, and found her son watching for her at the door, waiting to hear what news she brought, before setting out on his usual walk.

"Your uncle slips through it like an eel, Tom," she began. "I can make nothing of him one way or another. He does not say he will not take you in, but he does not say he will. What is to be done?"

"Nothing can be done that I know of, mother," replied Tom; "nothing at all. Uncle Jacob holds the power in his own hands, you see. If it does not please him to give me my lawful share, we cannot oblige him to do it."

"But how unjust it will be if he does not!"

"Yes. *I* think so. But, it seems to me there's little else but injustice in the world," added Tom, with a light smile. "You would say so if you were in a lawyer's office and had to dive into the cases brought there. Good-bye, mother mine."

Pretty nearly a year went on after this, bringing no change. "Jacob Chandler and Son, Solicitors, Conveyancers, and Land Agents," flourished in gilt letters on the front door at Islip, and Jacob Chandler and Son flourished inside, in the matter of business. But never a move was made to take in Tom. And when Jacob was asked about it, as he was once or twice, he civilly shuffled the topic off.

But, before the year had well elapsed, Jacob was stricken down. To look at him you would have said he had been growing thinner all that while, only that it seemed impossible. This time it was for death. He had not much grace given him, either: just a couple of days and a night.

He went to bed one night as well as usual, but the next morning did not get up, saying he felt "queer," and sent for Cole. Jacob Chandler was a rare coward in illness. That fining-down process he had been going through so long had not troubled him: he thought it was only his natural constitution: and when real illness set in his fears sprung up.

"You had better stay in bed to-day," said Cole. "I will send you a draught to take."

"But what is it that's the matter with me?" asked Jacob.

"I don't know," said Cole.

"Is it ague? Or intermittent fever coming on? See how I am shaking."

"N—o," hesitated Cole, either in doubt, or else because he would not say too much. "I'll look in again by-and-bye."

Towards mid-day Jacob thought he'd get up, and see what that would do for him. It seemed to do nothing, except make him worse; and he went to bed again. Cole looked in three times during the day, but did not say what he thought.

In the middle of the night a paroxysm of illness came on again, and a servant ran to knock up the doctor. Jacob was shaking the very bed, and seemed in awful fear.

And in the morning he appeared to know that he had not many hours to live. Knew it by intuition, for Cole had not told him. An express went flying to Worcester for Dr. Malden: but Cole knew—and told it later—that all the physicians in the county could not save him.

And the state of mind that Jacob Chandler went into with the knowledge, might have read many a careless man a lesson. It seemed to him that he had a whole peck of suddenly-recollected sins on his head, and misdeeds to be accounted for. He remembered Tom Chandler then.

"I have not done by him as I ought; it lies upon me with an awful weight," he groaned. "Valentine, you must remedy the wrong. Take him in, and give him his proper share. I'd like to see Tom. Somebody fetch him."

Tom had to be fetched from Islip. He came at once, his long legs skimming over the ground quickly; and he entered the sick-chamber with the cordial smile on his open face, and took his uncle's hand.

"It shall all be remedied, Tom; all the injustice; and you shall have your due rights. I see now how unjust it was: I don't know what God's thinking of me for it. I wanted to make a good provision for my old age, you see; to be able to live at ease; and now there is no old age for me: God is taking me before it has come on."

"Don't distress yourself, Uncle Jacob; it will be all right. And I'm sure I have not thought much about it."

"But others have," groaned Jacob. "Your mother; and Mary Ann; and—and Squire Todhetley. They have all been on at me at times. But I shut my ears. Oh dear! I wish God would let me live a few years over again! I'd try and be different. What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?"

And that was how he kept on the best part of the day. Then he called out that he wanted his will altered. Valentine brought in pen and ink, but his father motioned him away and said it must be done by Paul. So Paul the lawyer was got over from Islip, and was shut up alone with the sick man for a quarter of an hour. Next the parson came, and read some prayers. But Jacob still cried out his piteous laments, at having no time to redeem the past, until his voice was too weak to speak. At nine o'clock in the evening all was over.

The disease that killed him must have been making silent progress for a good while, Cole said, when the truth was ascertained: but he had never seen it develop itself with so little warning, or prove fatal so quickly as in the case of Jacob Chandler.

And you will hear the rest next month.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

FINE WEATHER AND FAIR WOMEN.

ONE fine August morning saw a large party assembled in the sunny breakfast-room at Leighton Court, in ——shire: the finest place in the county, with the finest park, and the best croquet-lawn in the neighbourhood.

A merry gathering. Mr. Leighton and his wife, surrounded by an unusually numerous family party, still increased on that occasion by several visitors. Mr. Leighton had been twice married, and two of his daughters by his first wife had been mothers long enough to add fair opening blossoms to the family wreath; while some of the present Mrs. Leighton's daughters were scarcely older than their half-nieces.

Mrs. Leighton, herself an ex-beauty but little over forty, still bloomed amid her "rose-bud garland of girls." But, alas! the group of fair feminine blossoms was almost entirely unshaded by the dark foliage of masculine attire. Two lads from Eton and Harrow, not yet escaped from the chrysalis stage of boyhood, and old Mr. Leighton, who had long passed the butterfly period of existence, were the only representatives of the sterner sex.

The rose-bud garland was a full one. Airy, fairy Lilians and stately Clara Vere de Veres mingled with little ones scarcely out of the nursery. Fancy the clatter of musical voices! The boys, sons of a friend in India, and old Mr. Leighton, had not a chance.

I and my reader enter at a critical moment with the toast and the letter-bag. Everyone seizes eagerly on his or her share of literature. Those who are not fortunate enough to have correspondents, take to the newspapers and periodicals; and a momentary pause ensues. It is broken by Mr. Leighton, who, looking up from his letter, asks, "Isn't your great croquet meeting to come off to-day?"

"Yes," and "Yes," with "So lucky, such a lovely day," being responded on all sides, he adds: "Then I daresay you won't be sorry to hear that an eligible young man will be added to the number of your guests."

Considering the circumstances above stated, it will readily be believed that this announcement caused general excitement among the population of the sunny breakfast-room, and the babel of feminine voices broke loose again. "Who is he?" "Where does he come from?" "Who's going to bring him?" "Can he play croquet?" With the added comments of "We want men so dreadfully; always the case down here; and worse than ever now the Brook Thompsons are away and Captain Anderson can't come."

And truly there seemed reasonable cause both for the rejoicings and the lamentations. One of the schoolboys, a precocious little man, attempted some assertion of masculine dignity by remarking that a pretty girl would have been a still more acceptable addition to the party; but as this was taken as an insinuation that none such were already present, the speaker got properly snubbed for his pains.

Lady Marchmont, the eldest of Mr. Leighton's daughters, and mother of the handsome twins of eighteen, Flora and Frederica, more generally known by the abbreviations Flo and Fred, silenced the hubbub by a sign; and then inquired, with well-assumed indifference, "who, after all, this eligible might be."

Mr. Leighton protested he had only waited for a lull in the storm to explain, which would be best done by reading aloud some portion of a letter from old Uncle John, meant to serve as an introduction to the new arrival.

"Uncle John writes to me," continued Mr. Leighton, "that his long-delayed choice of a successor is at last made. A nephew of his late wife, who has recently returned from a long foreign tour, is, it appears, regularly installed at Oxenham Hall as heir-apparent. He says—but here I may as well read his own words. 'This young man is all that I can desire; with good looks and good parts, accomplished and amiable: free alike from the vices of a former generation and the follies of the present. I am satisfied that he will do honour to our name, which I intend him to take, and that he will nobly administer the wealth, of which I now feel that I, from indolence, have made but a selfish use.' And now, young ladies, comes the gist of the matter; so lend me your ears, as somebody says in a play. The letter goes on: 'I feel that to you, my only near relation, whose son or grandson, had you had either, would have been my natural heir, I owe some explanation of my conduct, and'—but I will have pity on your impatience, and tell you in fewer words than Uncle John uses, that he proposes, hopes, and wishes that his heir may find a wife among what he calls my numerous female relatives and descendants. Having heard that we are all now assembled together, he sends him over to make a selection: only regretting that the infirmities of age prevent his performing the introduction in person."

"What a blessing!" screamed half a dozen voices; and "Do be quiet!" half a dozen more; while Mr. Leighton continued. "He will probably arrive by the two o'clock train to-day, in time for your party. So now I advise you all to combine archery with croquet, and see who can take the best aim at the hero's heart, handsome, accomplished, and amiable; and, moreover, heir to Oxenham Hall and upwards of twenty thousand a year. Think of that, and, let's see—is there anything else in the letter? Oh, yes—his name is Smith; not very aristocratic, certainly, but that doesn't matter, as he's to take ours. So now, girls, get yourselves up in your best. Choose your colours, train for the race,

and good luck to the winner! I must go and look at old Marmion's legs." So saying, the old gentleman walked off to the stables, as fast as gout would allow him, in the highest possible spirits; the question of Uncle John's ultimate disposal of the wealth, which was so entirely his own to will away, being thus, as it seemed, so happily solved. The man must be difficult to please, indeed, as he thought, who could not fix on a wife among the bevy of maidens, that even to less partial eyes must seem so fair.

The Squire departed, and left behind him a scene of pleasurable excitement. Besides the Marchmont twins, Mrs. Heathcote, the youngest of the first Mrs. Leighton's family, had one girl grown up, and three of the present Mrs. Leighton's daughters were supposed to be out. All were good-looking, in different styles; good-tempered, when not too much interfered with; giddy, as was natural to their age; and fast and silly, as is, alas! the normal condition of so many of their kind. There were present, besides, two other young ladies; quiet-looking girls; children of a deceased brother of Mr. Leighton, who had been imprudent in his worldly affairs, and left but a very scanty fortune to his widow and orphans. They were occasionally invited to Leighton Court by their good-natured uncle, who had no idea how ill they sometimes fared among their more prosperous and showy relatives.

The important question, "What shall we wear?" of course derived additional interest from the recent announcement. "I suppose Fanny and Ann will appear again in those dreadful old washed-out piqués," said one, alluding to the despised cousins.

"I suppose so, too," returned Fanny, unabashed; "faute de mieux, cousin."

"Then I am quite sure one of you will captivate the heir," was the taunting reply.

A few minutes afterwards, another opportunity for mortifying the victims occurred. Mrs. Heathcote announced that she had heard from her husband that he could not leave town so early as he expected, and he hoped if a person who was coming to see him on business from his lawyer should arrive before him, they would "treat him civilly," till he could join them.

"Oh! delightful! a lawyer's clerk; he will be a beau for Fanny and Ann. What a godsend for them, for otherwise there certainly would not have been one to spare."

"Civilly, indeed! what is papa thinking of?" cried another.

All this, if it did not show the good manners or good feeling of the more prosperous cousins, served at all events to exhibit the others in a favourable light, as their gentle faces expressed neither anger nor mortification. Perhaps because they were used to it.

And now the ladies rose; the elder to seek their dressing-rooms, and

confer with their maids, while the younger ones were hustled off to the schoolroom.

At about three o'clock that afternoon the whole party assembled on the beautiful lawn, level as a billiard-table, green as an emerald, to consult about the placing and arrangement of the different sets. And certainly a prettier scene was never shone upon by summer sun, even in merry England, where there are so many of the kind. The house, a modern antique, built by the present Squire's father to replace one on a lower site, was a happy mixture of the picturesqueness of a former age and the convenience of the present. It stood out bold and striking, with its terraces and flower-gardens, from a back-ground of fine trees, and commanded a magnificent view of the surrounding country, the glorious sweep of park stretching far and wide, till it melted into the general landscape, dotted with hamlets and village spires, and enlivened by occasional glimpses of a winding river.

Nor were the living forms unworthy of such accessories: the handsome girls and stately matrons, in light summer dresses, walked hither and thither, or formed into gay groups, round the croquet-hoops; while the pretty children, in their dainty costumes of lace and muslin, flitted like butterflies among them. As the guests began to arrive, they did not detract from the general effect. There were—which, it must be owned, is rare in our dear country—very few hideous toilets with combinations of colour painful to the eye; for it must be admitted by the most determined Anglomaniac that Englishwomen seldom have an eye for either form or colour, in connection with their own persons. As long as a dress is striking and showy, and, as they fondly hope, fashionable, no matter how incongruous it may be, or how unsuited to the appearance of the wearer, they are satisfied, and go about perfectly happy, after having made themselves look as ugly as nature, which made most of them so fair, will permit them to be.

And now the company dispersed, and the games began. Some played; some, unskilful, or indifferent, sauntered about, engaged in sweet, or sometimes in rather bitter converse; and all those groups of lovely ladies, but slightly shaded by the darker garments of the unlovely sex, flitted about, and chatted, and played, and drank tea out of the most delicate porcelain cups. The sun shone brightly, and laughter pealed around. An uninitiated spectator might have supposed that there were spots in the universe like glimpses of a brighter sphere, and have been tempted to forget for a moment that sordid misery, with all its concomitants, abounded in the world.

But I am not going to be philosophical, but tell my story, which is a true one. The enjoyment was at its height, when a servant came out to announce to Mrs. Leighton that Mr. Smith had arrived, and was waiting in the drawing-room. Surely never did that undistinguished patronymic cause such a sensation. "Oh! let him come out here at

once." "Mamma, go and fetch him." "Which set is he to play in?" "Oh! in ours; we haven't a single man." "No, in ours. Caroline is playing two balls." "But only suppose he can't play, or does not like croquet!" suggested a juvenile, less interested in the matter than those older. The idea was scouted, and in the midst of the confusion of voices, Mrs. Leighton came through one of the open windows, followed by a tall and certainly singularly handsome young man. He was well, though rather showily dressed; wore jewellery, but not too much; and a certain air of assurance and self-possession sat not ungracefully on one in the position he occupied, of course not quite unconsciously, of a sultan who had but to throw the handkerchief, and make the loveliest maid his own.

He was presented formally to all the ladies of the family, further introduction being deemed unnecessary. And certainly none of the other ladies considered themselves particularly aggrieved by being omitted in the ceremony. A Mr. Smith was too insignificant an individual to cause any excitement among those not prepared by announcement in the bills for the dénouement of the drama.

But among the home party, how many hearts beat high with hope and expectation? At least a dozen, counting the three mothers, and the two poor cousins, who, as bearing the name of Leighton, might be supposed to have the privilege of entering for the prize.

There is no doubt that the good mien of the hero made some difference in the feelings of the younger ladies; but as for the elder ones, the parent birds, I do verily believe that, if instead of being, as he really was, as handsome as Apollo, he had proved as ugly as Cyclops, it would have been all the same. They looked, with far-seeing eyes, beyond the present hour, with its pleasures and flirtations; through a long perspective of coming years, replete with wealth and comfort—country houses and town houses, carriages and servants, pleasant society, easily-paid bills, families well provided for, and consequent good temper and peace. And who shall say they were not wise in their generation? I, having long passed the age of love-making, am very much inclined to think there were, or, at all events, to think there is much to be said on both sides of the question; but I hesitate to put forward so unpopular an opinion.

Among the competitors, I should be very much inclined to bet upon the twins. They had the great advantage of playing into each other's hands; for such is the force of nature, these two otherwise worldly girls loved each other with an affection that was quite touching in its strength. They were as one soul in two bodies. The pleasure of one was the happiness of the other. A tear in the dark eyes of Flo was immediately mirrored in those of Fred, and a sigh from one bosom found an echo in that of the other. In short, they were a human duet, sung sweetly in tune, and as such there was interest about them which might otherwise have been wanting.

They wished, on the present occasion, that one of them should succeed, but they really did not care which; and Flo would have assisted Fred with the wealthy suitor, as willingly as Fred would have helped her sister to the prize. A lover was looked upon as quite secondary to a sister, and, with the idea of marriage, always came the thought, "Of course no one could separate us." If one was to be a bride, the other must be a perpetual bridesmaid.

Mabel Heathcote, with her golden hair, was certainly more beautiful; and many thought the second Miss Leighton a prettier girl; while the grace and vivacity of the elder sister gained her hosts of admirers and followers wherever she went. But still I would bet upon the twins for the reasons above stated.

Of course the poor cousins were entirely out of the running. They had been sent to play with a vulgar curate, and "those two dreadful Miss What'stheirnames, who must be invited," on the very worst piece of ground in the place—so much on the slope that their balls were always running down the hill, and keeping them in hot water among themselves and with their more fortunate neighbours on the level ground below—and so they were disposed of.

Mr. Smith was duly introduced to all the other members of the family, and if he noticed the flutterings and blushes, and charming embarrassment displayed by some of the young ladies, and guessed the cause, he had, at all events, the modesty and good manners to "bear his honours meekly."

Except the set on the slope in the corner, croquet came to a stand-still. On pretence of arranging how to bring the new-comer into the game, the question really was who should appropriate him. In vain he pleaded little knowledge and less skill, natural enough in one who had been so long abroad; offers of tuition were made on all sides, and he was soon the centre of a perfect rainbow of gay and gorgeous garments. The handsome twins in pale pink dresses, made exactly alike, one looking like the reflection of the other in a mirror, gazed upon him with dark, admiring eyes. Miss Heathcote, in the brilliant blue, which she knew contrasted so well with her golden tresses, was foremost with offers of advice and assistance, enforced by glances from eyes of the brightest sapphire; while the lovely Leightons, all robed in white, like so many fair brides, were close at hand biding their time, which soon came by the skilful generalship of their mamma: who, playfully assuming some authority as mistress of the house, decided that as "Caroline was playing two balls," he should fill up the vacant place in that set for the present. The others were obliged, however unwillingly, to submit, but without, as may be believed, losing sight of their object, on account of this temporary check.

Of course, from the family circle, the poor cousins in washed-out piqués were excluded by the family in their actions. They continued,

however, to amuse themselves as well as the nature of the ground to which they were exiled would allow; did not quarrel more than is usual at croquet; had even merry little jokes among themselves when the balls rattled away in the direction of the lake, and showed great activity and pretty ankles in pursuit of them. But what were pretty ankles and pleasant smiles when displayed by girls who were so badly dressed, were known to be miserably poor, and to inhabit some vulgar suburb of London! Girls, it was even whispered, who gave lessons in music, when they could get pupils, rather than be too much beholden to their kind uncle, who certainly, had he known it, would have prevented their submitting to such drudgery. One of them was even suspected,—oh horror!—of being engaged to some man who was an usher, or tutor, or clerk of some kind—or at all events to some one who, like Horatio, had "nothing but his good spirits to feed and clothe him." Could anything be more utterly depraved?

In the meantime, the groups on the lawn were very gay and animated. The set that possessed the heir were of course in the highest spirits; while the others, looking forward to his joining them later, watched all that went on, envious yet hopeful. He conducted himself discreetly, taking all the homage as his due, and returning it in compliments and polite attentions. He certainly did not distinguish himself in the game; but what of that?—croquet was for the time a mere pretence for loitering about, and giving each fair candidate an opportunity of displaying her pet airs and graces.

Thus far, then, he had no chance of showing any preference, and exciting jealous and angry feelings, and the guests in general agreed that never had a nicer party been given at the house, and never had the young ladies of the family been so charming and so agreeable.

In the midst of all this excitement, an incident occurred which pointedly exhibited the modern idea of hospitality, in the different welcome accorded to fortune's favourites and those less honored with her smiles. A second time a servant came out to tell Mrs. Leighton that a gentleman had arrived, and was waiting in the library, having walked up from the station.

Mrs. Leighton exchanged a few words with Mrs. Heathcote, and disappeared, returning shortly with a quiet-looking young man, whose appearance was not improved by the dust of the highroad, which covered his unpretending costume.

Various signals were made among the ladies as she came out, and passed among the different groups; and slightly saying that she found this gentleman was a croquet-player, and the set on the bank was less full, she led him at once to the party of the poor cousins, and there left him to make his way as best he could. What better fate could a lawyer's clerk expect? and, after all, it was not such a bad fate either. Those amiable girls, feeling for the slight he had suffered, immediately

did all they could to make up to him for it. One of the ladies of the party having complained of fatigue, they decided on beginning a new game, with the stranger to replace her, while she reposed ; and neither sister showed that she thought herself degraded by being for an hour the partner of a lawyer's clerk, and a very dusty one into the bargain. He apologised for his déshabille, saying he was not aware there was a party ; and the ladies were shortly rewarded for their condescension, if condescension it was, for not only it appeared that the new-comer was a first-rate player, soon turning the scale of victory on his side, but better still, on hearing his partner, Miss Ann Leighton, called by the rather vulgar, yet not common, name of Nancy, he exclaimed, "Nancy! Nancy Leighton ! I suspect I have heard a great deal of you ; do you know William Foster?" The smiles of one sister and the blushes of the other owned the soft impeachment. "Ah! I see you do ; then you must know he is my best and dearest friend."

Had an angel suddenly spread his wings before them, he could not have inspired more respect, or given more pleasure. William Foster was the name of the betrothed of the younger sister, the despised usher or tutor, who, though in holy orders, had so little chance of a living, as to support himself by imparting to others the learning he had already acquired ; but who, notwithstanding his small means and humble occupation, was adored by this simple family.

They were like acquaintance of old standing immediately. The stranger had so much to say. He had heard so much of them, and apparently all in their favour, from his friend, who seemed to be endowed with all the garrulity of a lover expatiating on the charms of his mistress, and to have included the whole family in his conversation. Many an anecdote was repeated and laughed over. So they played, and chatted, and grew intimate and friendly ; and of all the groups on that extensive lawn, perhaps the merriest was that despised one on the slope, composed of the pariahs of the party, but whose only trouble seemed to be that the balls would sometimes escape, and glide swiftly towards the water.

A much more serious cause of anxiety occupied the others. The ball at all their feet, the great matrimonial prize, seemed likely to escape them, or, at all events, to become the prey of the least considered of their number.

For some time Mr. Smith was pleasant and complimentary to all, and, as it seemed, to all alike. They grew desperate; fair cheeks flushed, white hands, gloved in the freshest Paris kid, trembled with emotion; and only the convenances of good society restrained them from displaying openly the feelings of jealous rivalry of each other, and admiration of the handsome and charming, but too undemonstrative swain, which filled their hearts.

By-and-by, however, one fair one, the youngest Miss Leighton, a

pretty débutante, only just out, and new to the world and its proprieties, seemed likely to overstep the bounds of prudery at least, and show openly by looks, and even words, her admiration of his beauty and pleasure in his society. What was worse, he seemed conscious of her undisguised preference, and inclined to return it by devoting himself to her; so at least it seemed to the jealous eyes that watched the scene, and the words "forward minx," and even "disgraceful conduct," might be heard borne in angry whispers on the afternoon breeze.

The mammas took an eager if comparatively passive part in all this. Mrs. Leighton was calmly triumphant, while Lady Marchmont and Mrs. Heathcote looked daggers at their half-sisters.

And so time wore on, the shadows lengthened, matrons and prudent chaperons began to talk of the rising dews of evening, to press shawls and wraps upon the juvenile players, and to call for their carriages.

The ladies of the family took hurried and careless farewells of their friends. They were too entirely engrossed in the game—not of croquet, but rather of écarté, for to score the king of hearts was the object of all, and none could yet proclaim the fact. Caroline seemed to be the favourite; but none as yet despaired, or gave up the prize as lost.

At seven o'clock all the guests had departed, and the home party gathered together near the house. Even the isolated game on the slope broke up, and joined the rest. Mrs. Heathcote began to look at her watch and speculate upon the time of her husband's arrival, when old Mr. Leighton, who had carefully avoided the scene of gaiety, appeared among them, followed by the missing spouse.

Mrs. Leighton hastened to introduce Mr. Smith, and Mr. Leighton was giving him the welcome due to a guest so heralded, when, to the astonishment of all, Mr. Heathcote stepped forward, and claimed him as an old acquaintance. "What, Heathcote! do you know Mr. Smith? where did you meet?"—"Where! in London of course, at old Cheatham's chambers. Know him! why, it's on my business he comes. I might have saved you the trouble, by the way, Smith, if I had known I should be detained in town till to-day, but I daresay you don't mind—a little country air is no bad thing, after being shut up all the summer in those confoundedly close chambers."

No transformation scene in Christmas pantomime was ever so complete! The handsome stranger, instead of being the expected heir, was the despised lawyer's clerk!—all saw at once their blunder. Smith! what more natural than that the lawyer's clerk, the obscure man of business, should be Smith! Why were they so precipitate?—It was to his good looks and calm assurance that the mistake was to be ascribed, and they most unreasonably felt angry with him as the cause. But nothing was to be said; blank looks and slight edgings away from his vicinity alone were perceptible. The change was so slight, that the

object of it, encased as he was in a goodly armour of conceit, seemed totally unaware of it. He had taken all the homage, all the attentions as the natural consequence of the remarkable personal qualifications of which he was so intensely conscious. The last thing he would have suspected was that it could have arisen from a mistake; and so he stood still blandly smiling upon all around, and apparently not remarking that except from the youngest Miss Leighton his smiles found no reflection in the fair faces of his new friends.

A still more dreadful idea was dawning in their minds. If this was the lawyer's clerk, where was the real Smith?—the heir? Was it possible that the insignificant-looking, dusty individual, whom they had been so anxious to "shunt off into a siding"—whom they had thrown, as it were, into the very jaws of the enemy—who had spent the whole afternoon making the intimate acquaintance of the two poor cousins, could be the prince in disguise—the husband whom all were so anxious to secure?—It was too dreadful! They could have bitten off their own tongues in despite, and beaten him for stealing upon them thus, a dusty, undistinguished pedestrian.

What was to be done? To acknowledge their blunder would be to expose themselves to inextinguishable laughter, so they made the best of it, like ladies as they were; said nothing to oppose the good-natured invitation Mr. Leighton gave the lawyer's clerk to spend a few days in the country air he seemed to enjoy so much; and hid their mortification as well as they could.

And what were the consequences of this imbroglio?

They were threefold. Before a week was out, the right Mr. Smith had proposed to, and been accepted by, the disengaged one of the poor cousins, and had promised a living to the fiancé of the other, his college friend and tutor. And the other Mr. Smith: the handsome impostor, as the ladies in their hearts called him, but who had never really dreamed of deceiving anyone, had eloped with the youngest Miss Leighton. The further consequences being, as we hope, the perfect happiness of two couples, and in the case of the third, no worse results than another family of poor cousins to be snubbed and despised.

Moral. Young ladies should not be too much taken with good looks and assured manners; and there should not be so many persons of the name of Smith.

THE SEA-GULL IN CAPTIVITY.

IN a description of a trip to the Scilly Isles,* the writer speaks of some sea-gulls which he brought away with him to Falmouth. One of these was given to me; the others were taken to London, and eventually to the Zoological Gardens. I propose to give a short account of the bird I have; for, interesting as these beautiful sea-gulls are in their wild state, they are yet more so in captivity, where they not only display their natural characteristics, but generally develop others which are as interesting to the zoologist as to all lovers of the domestic tribe.

On the bird's arrival in a house where "a local habitation and a name" have always been given to every description of pet, he was, after much discussion, named Peter; and in a very short time he not only knew his name, but answered to it. The cook, who has that true love for all feathered and four-footed creatures, which their instinct invariably detects, soon won the confidence and affection of the pretty little sea-gull; and with one exception, to be mentioned presently, no other living creature has been admitted to its friendship. In fact, Peter, is a very exclusive and independent bird.

His early days were uneventful. As no restraint whatever was put on his liberty, he soon began to make use of his wings, and gradually, from short flights, took to wheeling round the houses and gardens, high in the air; uttering from time to time the peculiar and plaintive cry so well known to those who have visited a coast where gulls abound. This went on for some time, Peter flying off, sometimes for a whole day, but always returning in the evening. One morning, however, after his usual breakfast of fish, he flew away and did not return in the evening as before. There were no signs of him the next day, and we gave him up for lost, supposing that he had deserted us for the more congenial society of his own species. But we did Peter an injustice. About three weeks after his departure, one of our friends passing by a cottage garden not very far from our house, recognised Peter's cry, or, at any rate, the cry of a gull. On making inquiries, we found out that about the time of Peter's loss, a gull had been captured by some boys bathing in the harbour, and given to the owner of the cottage, who at once cut its wings and kept it in confinement. On seeing the bird we at once recognised Peter, who was readily given up, and once more reinstated in his former quarters. Since then we have never allowed him the use of his wings.

* Argosy, *June*, 1874.

Some time ago we left Cornwall and brought Peter with us into Staffordshire, where, in spite of the change and colder climate, he is wonderfully well and lively. He has grown into a very fine bird, and is exceedingly interesting, his habits being often a great source of amusement to all who know him. Located as he is now, in a country place, among dogs, ducks, and poultry, with plenty of liberty, but well looked after, Peter has become quite domesticated, after his own fashion. During the last winter, he was allowed by his friend the cook to come into the kitchen and sit before the fire, where a small piece of carpet was placed for him. Peter took possession of this, entirely excluding two small kittens from any share in it. To these little animals he was quite a tyrant. If they attempted to sit on any part of his carpet, he drove them away; they were permitted to sit as near as they pleased to the edge of the carpet, but not on it. He invariably took away from them sticks or anything else that they began to play with; and on one occasion kept one of the kittens a prisoner in a drain-pipe into which it had run. No sooner was it in than Peter, always on the alert, took up his station outside, and there kept guard, pecking the kitten every time it tried to come out, until he was seen and the kitten rescued. In fact, they had a very bad time of it while in Peter's society.

Another occupant of the kitchen, however, found more favour with him. This was a retriever pup, now a very large dog, and the friend and companion of a sea-gull! To see these two together is most amusing. Whenever the dog lies down anywhere near Peter, he does not long remain unmolested; the bird leisurely walks up to him, and at once begins to pull his hair, and peck his tail every time it moves. To all this the good-tempered dog makes no objection—in fact, Peter can do what he likes with him. He will sometimes sit on his back, at others lie down close to his side, or even between his fore-paws, and when the dog is having his food, run off with portions of it from the plate, a liberty that none of the poultry dare take.

This is a very strange friendship, but not altogether an unusual one. Almost all animated beings are so fond of society of some kind or other, that, when they cannot get that of their own species, they will select creatures of a very different character, and often form very strong attachments for them. Morris mentions a tame gull that was kept in a garden, where it made a great friend of a terrier dog. Gawel speaks of another that made great friends with a pair of silver pheasants. But the most curious anecdote of a gull is given by Mr. Donaldson, in the "Naturalist." This bird acquired a taste for sparrows, and scarcely a day passed on which he did not regale himself with four or five. His system of catching them was this:—He was on the best terms with a number of pigeons, and as the sparrows fed along with them, he mixed in the grays, and, by stooping, assumed as much as possible their appearance, and then set at the sparrow as a pointer dog

would do at his game; the next instant he had his prey by the back and swallowed it without giving it time to shut its eyes. The sporting season with him began about the middle of July, as the young birds were leaving their nests. This was, however, rather a mercenary friendship.

Peter will not fraternise with the pigeons: he seems to object to them and the hens as much as he did to the kittens, as he never allows them to come near him without pecking at them savagely. At the same time, he swims about in the same water with the ducks, but takes no notice of them whatever. As a rule, he spends most of the day by himself, either swimming about in the water, or else standing close to its edge; but when he is at all hungry he walks up to the yard and stands under one of the kitchen-windows, looking out for his friend the cook. The moment he catches sight of her he begins to make his peculiar, plaintive cry, throwing up his head every time it is uttered. If nothing, however, is given to him, he will very often make a great noise in a curious manner. Bending his neck so as to get his head close to the ground, and almost between his legs, he will throw it up and make a sort of chuckling sound, unlike anything I have ever heard before. Whether it is a sign of anger or impatience, or whether it is merely done to attract attention, I am unable to say.

Like most gulls, Peter will eat almost anything, although, in his younger days, nothing would satisfy him but fresh fish. Now he is not so particular: he will eat meat, young chickens, and even small rats and mice: the latter he seems to have a great relish for. At one time he lived on nothing but snails and slugs. This was after his removal from Falmouth, for, being so far inland, we could no longer supply him with the fish he had been accustomed to, and for a few days we were afraid he would starve, as nothing seemed to suit his taste; but he very soon got used to a different fare, and now there is no trouble whatever in finding food for him.

At first, when fish was his only food, he seldom swallowed it without previously soaking it in his water, and now almost everything he eats goes through the same process. Until lately, I gave Peter the credit of being a very clean bird, especially as the snails, which he took great pains to wash, were mostly covered with dirt and particles of earth. But now I am inclined to think that the washing is in some cases necessary, to enable the bird to swallow. A short time ago, a dead chicken was given to Peter, which he carried off to his water and wetted well, before he attempted to swallow it. A few days after, he picked up a couple of young rats that had been killed in a trap, and took them one by one to the water, and then, after his usual process, easily disposed of them. I have already said that he is very fond of mice, and sometimes he has two or three for his breakfast; but often, in his eagerness, he will take the mouse first offered to him, and swallow it

dry—a difficult process, apparently, as it is not repeated; the second and third, if he gets them, are always taken into the water, to be well soaked before deglutition. He invariably takes the rat or mouse head first, so that he has some little trouble in getting the tail down, if it is at all long.

Both locality and food seem to agree with Peter extremely well, for a finer bird could not be seen anywhere; moreover, he seems to be very well contented with his solitary life, and when nothing interferes with him, is very quiet, although occasionally rather mischievous. He is not allowed to come into the kitchen now, but whenever he gets a chance, he marches in after his friend the cook, always attacking anyone who attempts to turn him out or prevent his coming in. He runs about after the cook just as a dog would; the moment he hears her voice, he utters his peculiar cry, and runs up to her; but if anyone else speaks to him he pays not the slightest attention.

Every night he is put into a small yard where the ducks are kept, but not content, like them, to rest on the ground, he has a special bed for himself—a little pillar of loose bricks, placed on top of a hen-coop. He has always shown a desire to sit on anything raised from the ground, such as a mound of earth or heap of stones; whether it is prompted by instinct or peculiar fancy, I cannot tell.

Altogether, the bird is one of the most interesting pets we have ever had, and as I have heard of a gull living thirteen years in confinement, it is not unreasonable to hope, that, with care and attention, we may be able to keep Peter for many years to come, not only as an amusement but as a study.

Those who never keep animals or birds of any kind, little know what a great amount of real pleasure they lose; besides the opportunities of acquiring information that may be useful, and making observations which are almost sure to be rewarded by the discovery of some new and interesting facts. It is a great mistake to suppose that even the familiar animals around us are already so well known as to afford no possibility of learning anything fresh about them. The intelligent principle in the lower creation, which we call instinct, is very often brought into play, and largely developed by situation and force of circumstances, as every observant lover of nature knows. Numerous instances of this are to be found in all works on natural history, but in the book of nature itself the careful student will find many beauties and unknown facts that will amply repay his labours. The works of creation, animate or inanimate, are so full of such varied interest to those who study them, whether for the advancement of science or merely for their own recreation, that it is impossible to select any field of observation, however limited, in which there is not something to be discovered.

W. Sidney Randall.

THE LITTLE SHOES.

Translated from the French by ROGER NORTH, R.A.

ON the 6th January, 1776, the festival of the Epiphany, a scene occurred on the quarter-deck of the French ship *Heron*, which is worth relating.

All the officers not actually on duty were walking the deck, smoking and talking, when a young cadet ascended the ladder leading from the captain's cabin, and cried: "Hats off, gentlemen. The Queen is coming!"

And still Marie Antoinette had not yet quitted Versailles, and by the aid of the lame demon Asmodeus, or of second-sight, she might at this moment have been descried in a secluded portion of the palace, where, free from the etiquette of her deadly enemies, she was engaged in amateur acting in her family circle.

Who, then, was this fair usurper, who, at a distance of twelve hundred miles from Versailles, assumed that sceptre which the rightful Queen was only too glad to exchange for a few moments for a shepherd's crook? We will only say, briefly, there was no crime in the usurpation, no injury to Majesty.

The dignity to which the crew of the *Heron* paid homage was only the innocent and transient royalty of a day. The person on whom the distinction had fallen was a pretty little Creole from the island of Martinique, a relation of the captain, who, like the Virginie of Bernardin de St. Pierre, wished to push her fortunes in the chief city of the world under the protection of an old aunt.

It was a pity that the young Queen held only a mock rank, for she discharged her duties with a decision and vivacity that Catherine the Second or Maria Theresa might have envied.

"On your knees, my pretty page," she said to the young cadet who had announced her approach. "Don't you see that I have dropped my glove? Here, my ministers of state, this way, and do not laugh, for the case is serious. I love my people, remember that, and I wish my people to love me. We must now decide whether, in order to secure their homage, blue bows would look better on my shoes than white ones."

And so a thousand jests and a thousand childish tricks proceeded from her, till the honest tars laughed so heartily that they suffered their pipes to go out.

An old Breton sailor, named Peter Hello, seemed most of all to

rejoice in the triumph of the artless maiden. He was covered with more wounds than wrinkles, and had that day received a medal, as a tardy recognition of his long services.

On this occasion the captain had invited him to the table at which the two ladies, his relatives, presided. Marie Rose—such was the young girl's name—would listen with amazement to the recital of Peter Hello's yarns. She had so flattered and caressed the rough old man, that his heart, moved by such unwonted sensations, had beaten as quickly at the child's kindness as it did when he received the medal.

He alone waited upon her; he was almost her only protector; for her aunt, a good old soul who was chained to her chair by the gout, spent her whole day in the perusal of St. Augustine's writings, only varying her occupation by occasionally exclaiming, "Come, Minette! Come, Marie Rose!" whenever she detected her cat in the pursuit of a mouse, or her niece chasing a sunbeam. Marie Rose, however, as independent as most colonists' daughters, either did not hear or assumed deafness.

At times she would amuse the crew with singing and dancing; then old Peter would be all attention: he seemed suddenly to be endued with understanding to appreciate the songs, and with taste to admire her animation.

The day succeeding her brief reign saw the poor child in a very sad and pensive mood. The old sea-bear posted himself in front of her, restless and silent as a faithful hound which sees its master weeping. She could not refrain from giving him her confidence, he looked so full of inquiring sympathy.

An old negress, who commonly passed as a witch, and used secretly to bring bread to Marie Rose when she played about as a child in the forests of her native island, had once given utterance to a remarkable prophecy, which had given the child food for much reflection. Part of it she remembered word for word. "My good little lady, I saw a great condor in the clouds, rising higher and higher, with a rose in its beak. Thou art the rose; thou wilt be very unhappy; then thou wilt become a queen; then comes a great storm, and then death."

"Yesterday I was a queen," she murmured, "and now I have nothing to expect but the storm which is to destroy me."

"Have no fear, mademoiselle," said Peter Hello. "If the *Heron* does meet with a mishap, you have to do nothing but lay hold of the end of my jacket. With God's help and the aid of my patron-saint you would reach land as easily as a little schooner taken in tow by a three-master."

Marie Rose was a little pacified, and rewarded the old man by singing a song which no one had ever heard before. It was a farewell greeting from a young Creole friend, who, when the departure of her

little playmate was decided upon, had put her lament into verse, and set it to music. But there is an age at which all sorrowsare transient. The sorrow of the night disappears with the morning, as the dew yields its sway to the sunbeams. Marie Rose had not yet passed this age.

Next day she was dancing as gaily as ever, and the days and weeks passed without any termination being put to her cheerfulness. Her shoes, however, did not display the same endurance. One little slipper was sent to its last resting-place by the final pas of a tarantella. Unfortunately, the ladies had brought a very scant wardrobe with them, as they wished to place themselves under the sway of the Paris fashions on their arrival.

Marie Rose was soon compelled to sit quietly by her aunt's side. She concealed her shoeless feet under her clothes, and kept her head and body in a fever of unrest. The little queen wept like a captive princess in an enchanted tower, awaiting the arrival of some knight-errant to free her. The knight-errant appeared in the person of Peter Hello. But although the poet has said "desperation makes verses," he has not said that desperation makes shoes. Peter Hello reflected for a long time. He searched and hunted everywhere; he turned everything over, and peered into every cranny of the ship big enough to shelter a mouse. At length he uttered a cry, such as proceeded from Harpagon when he recovered his chest of gold, or from Jean Jacques Rousseau contemplating the growth of his evergreens. It was no flower, no treasure which Peter Hello had discovered; something far more precious—a boot! The boot of a soldier who had been killed attempting to board the ship. It had rolled into some corner of the vessel and remained lying there ever since, as if mourning for its twin brother, which had been drowned in the sea or buried in the maw of a shark.

Peter Hello made use of his dirk as both knife and awl, and he cut and bored to such purpose that in less than an hour he had manufactured—I had almost said, a pair of shoes. Respect for truth, however, compels me to say they were neither shoes, boots, nor slippers; neither top-boots, gaiters, goloshes, nor even moccasins. They were a work quite peculiar in the annals of shoemaking, fantastic and romantic, things without a name. But these very nameless articles could, in a case of need, be utilised in shielding the human foot from the hard boards of the ship. The honest Hello ran at once to Marie Rose in her cabin, and after he had encased the tiny feet of the girl, undaunted by her loud langhter, in these droll coverings, and tied them up, he raised himself, crossed his arms on his breast with a triumphant look, and said, "Now!" An hour later, the Bayadère once more danced, though with a weight attached to each foot, amidst the loud approval of the spectators.

At last, after a long voyage, came a cry from the foretop of "Land!

land!" A really touching scene ensued between Marie Rose and Peter Hello.

"I shall always think of you, and keep the shoes as a memento; I shall preserve them as a precious relic," said Marie Rose, striving to console Peter, who brushed the tears from his eyes with the back of his horny hand.

"Ah!" he answered, shaking his head. "You are going to Paris, where, amongst new friends, you will forget poor Peter Hello; you won't trouble yourself about him any more."

"Always!" she answered, as she followed her aunt on shore.

He looked after her as long as he could. She turned about frequently, and even when she was out of his hearing, she still continued to cry out, as she waved her handkerchief, "Always, Peter! always!"

Peter Hello had no means of knowing whether the young girl kept her word, for he seldom came on shore, and he met his death in the American war.

As to Marie Rose ——

Here, however, my narrative is broken through by the great stream of the Revolution. The raging depth of its abyss would make you giddy. Give me your hand, fair reader; close your eyes, and let us skip over it.

We find ourselves in the midst of the Empire; at Malmaison, in fact, the residence of the noble but unhappy Josephine, who had been declared by a legal separation to be the widow of the living Napoleon, still remaining an Empress, still reigning in the hearts of the French people, who adored her and were unwilling to ratify the separation.

Seated at her piano, she was at this moment listening to a deputation of young girls belonging to her household, who shyly begged for permission to act proverbs.

"Certainly, dear children," said Josephine. "I myself will provide the dresses. Thanks to the generosity of the Emperor, my wardrobe is richly supplied. Look what they have just sent me."

She tapped her foot carelessly against a costly fur which lay on the carpet. It was so beautiful that Mademoiselle S. R., the youngest of the deputation, clapped her white hands and cried out, "How happy you are, your Majesty!"

"Happy!" murmured Josephine—"happy!" She sank into a deep reverie for a few moments, and her fingers glided idly over the piano. A few chords resounded; it was the well-known romance—

> "My fleeting joy has passed away,
> And grief within my breast holds sway."

Then shaking off the sad memories by which she had been oppressed, she got up.

"Come, ladies; who loves me, follow me. You can select your dresses." She led the way to the wardrobe. The joyous young train followed her. The girls opened their eyes wide as did Ali Baba on entering the cave for the first time. There were diaphanous garments, so light that they might have flown away like gossamers, had they not been detained by the weight of the heavy jewels with which they were adorned.

There were Spanish mantillas, Italian mezzoras, Odalisque wrappers all redolent of the fragrance of the East and of the powder of Abukir; and many other garments so gorgeous that our Lady of Loretto herself would only have put them on when making a pilgrimage to Paradise.

"Take what you want, children, and amuse yourselves to your hearts' content. I give all these pretty things up to you which you have admired so much;—all with one exception; something too sacred and too precious for me to allow anyone to touch it." As she, however, saw the curiosity sparkling in the eyes of all, she said, "I can at least show you my treasure."

One can imagine how fancy, the silly passion paramount in every fifteen-year-old mind, was suddenly aroused in the heads of all these children. What a marvel this must be which was not to be touched, when they were permitted to handle so many precious things at will! Perhaps a dress of the fashionable hue, or of the colour of the sun or of the moon, as in the fairy tales. Perhaps the bird's egg which, according to the story in the "Arabian Nights," is composed of diamonds, and has the property of making one invisible?

At last Josephine searched in a corner of the Imperial wardrobe, for she saw the impatient curiosity on all faces. She had, indeed, provoked it from a little innocent malice. Enough. She looked for and produced no gift of Napoleon's; the work of no great artist; but simply the work and the gift of the old sailor, of old Peter Hello—the shoes given to Marie Rose. Of course you have long since guessed it: the Empress Josephine and the shoeless dancer were one and the same person.

When Buonaparte's sword commenced to dissever Europe, Josephine Marie Rose Tascher de la Pagerie once more became a happy Queen. She reigned for a long time; but one day a great storm arose in Europe, and the snow in Russia rose up in masses and covered the French troops like a white winding-sheet. Foes poured upon France from all the four winds, and in the flash of swords, the thunder of cannon, and the roar of battle, there was as fearful a convulsion as in an earthquake in the Antilles.

When the horizon had once more become clear, the prophecy of the negress had been fulfilled. The great condor, struck by lightning, had let the rose fall; and the Creole from the three islands, twice a Queen, had perished in the tempest.

PARKWATER.

By the Author of "East Lynne."

CHAPTER XXI.

A RACE WITH TIME.

AS if to give the unhappy prisoner the chance of life, that she was struggling to find, Colonel Devereux landed in England on that selfsame day. The yacht, which belonged to a friend of his, Major Courtney, put in to Deal. They, and sundry more friends (choice spirits all, and Colonel Devereux the oldest and the choicest), had come back from a long cruise. The yacht had been for the greater part of the time out at sea, only touching now and again at some foreign port for provisions. Home news was therefore fresh to them. Colonel Devereux and one of the others, Viscount Dooham, purposed getting up to town at once; and, while waiting for a train, solaced themselves with some bitter beer and the newspapers.

"Hallo!" cried the Viscount, a very young man, in his teens yet, "here's a woman going to be executed on Monday."

"Ah!" carelessly remarked Colonel Devereux, who was glancing over the military news.

"I say, waiter," said the Viscount, halting in his reading, and looking up from the newspaper, "what did she do? It says she is young and handsome."

"Who, sir?" asked the waiter, who had not been attending.

"This—what's the name?—Sophia Lyvett. She is to be hung on Monday."

"It's a lady who killed her child, sir. That is, a child," added the man, striving to be correct. "Some say she was only its aunt, or a relation of that kind."

"A lady?" repeated the Viscount, lifting his eyebrows, and kicking Colonel Devereux's feet, that he might take note of the amusing waiter.

"Yes, sir, a lady. Leastways, her husband was a gentleman. She was just married, and nobody knew anything about this child; which it was a previous marriage she had made, report says, if it was her child. The child was brought home to her unexpected by the woman who had it at nurse, and the lady got afraid, and took its poor little life. It's said that when the police went to take her she was going to a ball, dressed out in satin and diamonds."

"Was she tried in that?" asked Colonel Devereux, yawning. The news did not interest him.

"In what, sir?"

"The satin and the diamonds. Dooham, she must have created a sensation in the court."

The waiter shook his head. "I don't think she was, sir, or the papers would have said it. She was remarkably handsome. Educated, too: plays and sings beautiful, it's said. It has made a great deal of stir, I assure you, gentlemen."

"Young and handsome!" cried Lord Dooham. "Perhaps she'll get off."

"Oh no, sir, there's no chance of that. She's to be hung on Monday morning, without fail. I know some gents as talk of going up to see it."

"What, all the way from here!"

"Well, you see, sir, it's a case quite out of the ordinary."

"Devereux," resumed Lord Dooham, as the communicative waiter went away, "did you ever see an execution?"

Colonel Devereux nodded.

"I never did," said the Viscount, deprecatingly, almost ashamed to avow the fact. "Suppose we go and see this one?"

"You can go," said the Colonel. "I sha'n't. The last I went to was enough for me: I said then I'd never go to another."

"Well, I should like to go."

"It's not worth it. I wonder how long this train means to be!"

The Colonel got up and stretched himself: utterly unconscious that the ill-favoured affair under discussion could in any possible manner concern him.

"By Jove, I hear the train!" cried Lord Dooham. "Come on, Colonel."

Colonel Devereux took his seat in the train, and went steaming up to London. It was growing dusk when he reached his home. A woman who had waited, in her patience, outside that house for many hours, saw the cab drive up, and watched him in. He greeted his wife with cool indifference: it was the best greeting he ever vouchsafed her. That Lady Harriet received him this night with unusual coldness he did not notice, and would not have cared for, if he had noticed it. Ordering lights into the library, he went in, and Lady Harriet let her aching head fall upon her hand. There were moments when her hard lot pressed poignantly upon her: it did this night. Not a loving word for her after his many weeks' absence; not a greeting kiss! And the unpleasant episode of the day had made her head ache violently.

She was interrupted by the entrance of the footman. He whom we saw at the door in the afternoon.

"My lady," he cried, "here's that woman come again. I believe

she has been waiting outside all this time. She will not go away, and she says your ladyship promised her she *should* see the Colonel."

"Yes, I did promise. Show her at once into the library. It is right that she should see him," Lady Harriet added, in a murmur, to herself —"right, in justice and in mercy."

Mrs. May took Colonel Devereux by surprise. The servant said, as he threw open the door, "A person to see you, sir," for she had refused to give her name, and then he closed it again. The Colonel was standing before two wax-lights, reading letters. Mrs. May looked at him: a dark, repulsive-faced man, who stared at her in astonishment. At least, the heavy frown on his face caused it to be repulsive then.

For Colonel Devereux was not in the habit of allowing this kind of impromptu intrusion, and felt wroth both with the intruder and his servants. Mrs. May stood trembling just within the closed door.

"Who are you?" he demanded, haughtily. "What do you want?"

"Oh, sir, don't be harsh with me!" she implored, stepping forward. "If all that I suspect is true, you ought not to be. I have come with a message from *her*."

He began to think this woman must have escaped from Bedlam. Truly she looked wild enough: and trouble was rendering her incoherent.

"From *her*, sir. My poor child, Sophiar Lyvett, who is in Newgate a-waiting for her execution."

A recollection of Lord Dooham's conversation with the waiter at Deal recurred to Colonel Devereux. He connected the woman's words with that, as having reference to the same subject, but he connected them with nothing else.

"Waiting for her execution!" he repeated, when his surprise allowed him to speak. "Sophia Lyvett!—what have I to do with it, if she is? She is nothing to me."

"She ought to be something to you," retorted Mrs. May, indignant at what she thought was his want of humanity. "She was something to you when she was Sophia May—if 'twas only as an acquaintance living in the same house."

"So-phi-a May!" he repeated slowly, his haughty tone changing to a subdued one. "It is not Sophia May who—who is condemned, is it?"

"It is nobody else, sir," answered the mother, bursting into tears. "She had just been married to young Mr. Lyvett."

The flush that had suddenly heated the Colonel's face turned cold again. He sat down, and passed his handkerchief across it.

"I don't know that I understand," he said. "I heard—certainly —there was some young person left for execution. The—the crime was the killing of a child, was it not?"

"Yes, sir. A little boy that would have been, it's said, two years old come September."

Colonel Devereux rubbed his hot face. These unpleasant topics affect some people. Mrs. May thought how ugly he looked as the light of the candles shone upon him.

"What do you want with me?" he asked.

"Sophiar says you can save her, sir," replied Mrs. May, her voice dropping to somewhat of a confidential tone, which tone would, of itself alone, have aroused the Colonel's ire. "She says that you are related to some great man, an officer of state, I think she called him, who can pardon or hang criminals, according to his will; and she bade me say, sir, that you must ask for her pardon from him, and get it."

"I cannot do it," returned Colonel Devereux, aghast. "The—the person you allude to would not listen to me. I—I don't know any person; I don't know what you mean," he added, speaking his contradictory words with hesitation.

"Oh, sir, she says you can. I believe, from your own manner, that you can: and may you find mercy yourself in your dying hour, as you now—if it be in your power—show mercy for my poor condemned child!"

"Don't introduce any of that trash," was the interruption, for any allusions that bore reverence were never acceptable to Colonel Devereux; and just now he was feeling frightfully annoyed. "It will not weigh with me; quite the contrary. It is impossible that I can attempt to save her."

His tone of irritation, his apparent refusal, told harshly on Mrs. May, and she could have found, in her heart, to strike him as he sat. As to himself, his temper was always bad, and he had never been driven into such a corner as this.

"I *can't* do it," repeated Colonel Devereux. And he believed that he could not.

"Then, sir, am I to go back to the prison to-morrow, to that unfortunate girl, who is beside herself with hope and excitement, and tell her that you refuse to help her? That will be a bad finish to my day's work. Sir, I have stood outside this house ever since noon, pacing about in the broiling sun and sitting down upon the opposite doorsteps with no comfort but my weary heart."

"No one asked you to do it," was the Colonel's rejoinder.

"Perhaps not," she resentfully replied. "But the lady gave me hope that you might be home to-night, and I should have waited there all night, and to-morrow, and the next night, if you had not come."

"What lady?" he hastily inquired.

"One that came up to the door when the grand footman with the white head would have drove me from it. He called her 'my lady,' and she brought me in, and heard my story, and was sorry for me: and I think, sir, it was she that gave leave for me to enter to-night. Sophia said you had no wife, sir; but it struck me the lady must be your

wife, and I took the liberty to ask the man just now, and he said, Yes, it was."

Colonel Devereux was frowning ominously.

"And now that I know it was your wife, sir, I'm thankful that I did not say all that was in my thoughts, for I am sure she has a kind heart, and it would have troubled it. Truth is, I knew it might do my poor Sophia no good with such great ladies. There was another lady with her, younger."

"You had no business to come to my house at all," he exclaimed, in his great irritation. "I cannot help you. You can go."

"Oh, sir, pray don't say so!"

Colonel Devereux rose and pointed to the room door. "Your coming here has been a mistake," he said. "I feel sorry for your daughter, but I have no power to save her. She labours under a delusion in supposing I have. Tell her so."

"Sir," cried Mrs. May, preparing to depart, "you best know. But if ever so little power rests with you, and you mean to sit down with your hands afore you and not try to use it, but let her go uncared for to her cruel death, I can only say that you will deserve to suffer as much as she does: and so the public will say when they come to know the truth. Yes, sir: for I'm sure that what I suspect in my mind is the truth. Sophia has been silent, and kept your name and the past from the world; but it is more than me and her father will do if she dies without your bestirring yourself to save her. We ——"

"Will you go?" sternly interrupted Colonel Devereux, whose hand was still pointing to the door.

"We will publish the story abroad, sir: it shall be in all the newspapers in this blessed town. I'll tell it out aloud as long as there's a soul left to listen to me."

Mrs. May dropped a curtsey, for she never forgot her respect to her betters, turned, and left the room. Had the natural lines of his face not been so unsympathetic, his black eyes so hard, she would have fallen down prostrate and clasped his knees, and besought him with tears to accord her prayer. But she saw him at his worst: and she believed that there was neither goodness nor humanity, no, nor a spark of compassionate feeling, to arouse in Colonel Devereux.

Colonel Devereux's first movement, on being left alone, was to take a few strides on the library carpet, and give vent to sundry uncomfortable ejaculations. When he had, by these means, a little cooled his wrath and perplexity, he sat down to deliberate.

His imagination took him, and would take him, to the next Monday morning, to the sight which Lord Dooham had invited him to go and witness. The various points rose up before him, one after another, like the pictures in a phantasmagoria. The great, ugly machine, raised aloft in the air; the sea of faces lifted to it; the deep bell of St. Sepulchre,

tolling out its deadly strokes; Calcraft playing with his cords; the chaplain, in his white surplice, coming slowly on, reading the service for the dead over the living; and an ill-fated girl tottering on behind, who certainly, in one sense, had a claim upon his sympathy, and upon any exertion he might be able to make in her behalf. Colonel Devereux, in spite of himself, shuddered a little; what feeling he possessed was for once touched.

Self was always prominent with him; and Mrs. May's concluding words made, perhaps, more impression on him than all the rest—that the truth, if Sophia died, should go forth to the world. At least, what she pleased to think the truth. That, at any rate, must be stopped, if possible. To have his name bandied about in conjunction with this extraordinary and sensational affair, would be, to say the best of it, inconvenient.

Presently he rose up suddenly, as if some plan of action had occurred to him, and went into the drawing-room. His wife was sitting there.

"Do you happen to know whether Sir Archibald is in town?" he demanded.

"He is," answered Lady Harriet. "And complaining of having too much to do to leave it. So your sister said to-day when she came home with me."

So! It was Lady Tennygal, then, who had been the second lady spoken of by Mrs. May! And he had passed his word to her and Tennygal in those old days at Parkwater. He turned impatiently, to leave the room.

"Are you going out?" asked Lady Harriet.

"I am. What of that?"

"Nothing," she sighed. "Shall you be late?"

"Very possibly. I may not be in at all to-night."

"To neglect me is nothing new," thought poor, patient Lady Harriet; "but he has never once asked after the children!"

Colonel Devereux proceeded to his father's residence, and learnt that Sir Archibald was dining out. Lady Devereux was at home, the servant said.

"Alone?" he inquired.

"No, sir. Lady Tennygal is with her."

With a muttered word, not at all a fair one, Colonel Devereux turned to leave the house again. "Sir Archibald breakfasts early, as usual?" he looked back to say.

"Oh yes, sir."

So the Colonel returned home again. He took some refreshment, which he had not yet done since leaving Deal, passed an hour in the library with his large accumulation of letters, and then went to bed.

Early rising was not amid the virtues of Colonel Devereux. Besides, he had passed a remarkably restless night, and towards morning he

dropped into a heavy sleep. It was past eight when he awoke. With uncommon speed he dressed, went out without breakfasting, and threw himself into a hansom, desiring to be driven to Sir Archibald Devereux's. The man whipped up his horse, that it might go its best, as behoved it when taking a fare to the great Sir Archibald's, her Majesty's Secretary of State. Colonel Devereux paid the man, and bounded into the house.

"Is Sir Archibald in his breakfast-room?"

"Sir Archibald has breakfasted and gone out, sir."

"Gone out!"

"Twenty minutes ago, sir."

"Hallo!" called out Colonel Devereux, rushing out again. "Stop the cab."

The man was driving off, but turned his horse round at the call. Colonel Devereux got into the cab.

"Where to, your lordship?" asked the man, putting on the title at a venture.

The question was a poser to Colonel Devereux. The wide world of London was around him, and he knew not in what little spot of it to find Sir Archibald. "Wait," he said to the driver, and went into the house again. His brother Lionel, who acted as Sir Archibald's private secretary, was in the library, opening letters.

"Lion, where's the governor?"

"What, is it you!" exclaimed Lionel Devereux, raising his head. "When did you get back?"

"Last night. Where is he gone, I ask?"

"He did not say. Something troublesome is up, I expect, for he swallowed his breakfast at a mouthful, and was off. *My* opinion is that the ministers are on their last legs, Tody. He was with Harebury the best part of yesterday."

Colonel Devereux paused to reflect. It was possible—not likely, but just possible—that his mother might know. She was not down stairs, he heard; so he ascended a flight higher, and knocked at the door of her chamber.

"Come in," answered her ladyship, who was yet in bed. She supposed it to be her maid, and when the door opened and a black head presented itself, she shrieked out and buried her face under the clothes.

"Don't be alarmed," said the Colonel, "it's only I. Sir Archibald is out, I find; do you know where he is gone to?"

"Good gracious, Theodore! What in the world do you come startling me, like this, for?"

"I am in a hurry. I want particularly to see my father, and my business with him will not bear delay. Have you any idea where he is gone?"

"How should I have?" returned Lady Devereux. "He does not worry me with his business affairs, and his politics."

Colonel Devereux went down to the cab again. "Downing Street."

Sir Archibald was not in Downing Street; had not been there. From thence he drove to the premier's, Lord Harebury. Lord Harebury had gone out of town the previous afternoon.

The cabman had a rare fare, for once. Until past noon he was driving the Colonel about from place to place. All in vain: no tidings could be heard anywhere of the Home Secretary. Whether Colonel Devereux's conscience had come to him in his restless night, or that Mrs. May's threat was preying upon him, certain it was he was now feverishly bent on obtaining the reprieve of that poor unhappy criminal left for execution. Hot, jaded, irritated, he drove once more to his father's house. Sir Archibald was in—had been in since ten o'clock; and Colonel Devereux, when he heard it, gave the cabman his fare, and a hard word or two to the world in general. Sir Archibald was alone, and his table was covered with papers.

"Ah, Tody! So you are back again."

"I have been out looking for you all the morning, sir, and a pretty hunt I have had of it. Can you spare me five minutes?"

"No," answered Sir Archibald. "I am too busy."

"But I must demand it—I *must*," returned the Colonel; and Sir Archibald felt some surprise, for his voice had a sound of emotion in it. "It is on a matter of life or death," said the Colonel, abruptly.

"Well, two minutes, then. I can't give you more."

"There's a girl to be hung on Monday morning at Newgate."

"Ah, there is," replied Sir Archibald, supposing that his son ignored his injunction, and was entering on a little prefatory gossip. "A sad affair! It is the same young woman who once got into Bessie's house, as governess, by means of false certificates. I told you I was busy."

"Is she sure to suffer?"

"Sure! What do you mean?"

"She is young to—let the law take its course, as they call it."

"Young in years; I fear old in iniquity. Of course the law will take its course. Theodore," continued Sir Archibald, imperatively, "I am short of time. What is your business?"

"Sir, this is my business," answered Colonel Devereux, dashing at once to the point. "I have come to ask you to save her."

"Save *her!*" echoed Sir Archibald.

"Yes, sir, to save her."

"You cannot know what you are saying. I could not save her life if she were my own daughter; no, nor would I. There has been enough hullaballoo raised lately over this kind of thing, as you must know, and clemency is stopped for a time."

Theodore Devereux did know it. It had been the fashion for some

time to pardon every prisoner left for execution, no matter of how deep a dye the crime; the public had cried out about it, and the Home Secretary had in consequence found himself in a little hot water.

"Why, in the name of wonder, should you make this senseless application to me?" he demanded of his son, who was evidently ill at ease. "What have you to do with the hanging or non-hanging of criminals?"

"I have something to do with this one," returned Colonel Devereux, bending his face, as if to examine some of the papers on the table. "At least, I wish to have."

"Well?" For he really had the grace to hesitate, not at all liking to say to his father what he had to say.

"Well?" repeated Sir Archibald. And the other spoke a few words in a low tone.

Sir Archibald Devereux sat gazing at his hopeful son, and there ensued a dead silence.

"If you never accord me a petition from henceforth, sir, you must accord me this," urged Colonel Devereux. "She has sent to me, from Newgate, to save her life; to intercede with you to spare it. She says I owe so much to her. Perhaps I do."

A great scowl had gathered on Sir Archibald's brow. "Have you been cognisant of this all along?—since the woman was first apprehended?"

"I never heard a syllable of the matter until yesterday when I got home: and then I did not know who the condemned person was. Her mother came to me last night. Sir, you must save her."

"The thing is not possible," returned Sir Archibald.

"It can be made so, sir. The power rests with you."

"The whole country would cry out against it. There would be one universal feeling of indignation raised upon me. The woman is detested for what she has done, and receives no pity. A poor little harmless sleeping child! says the public. And when it demanded—as it naturally would demand—upon what grounds I had acted, I should have none to give. No, it would damage me too much."

"Stand it, stand the damage," pleaded Colonel Devereux, pushing his hair from his brow. "Sir, I *dare* not let her suffer. Whatever may be the consequences, consent to risk them. At the worst, they can be but trifling—none at all to you personally: a little wonder, a little blame from the press."

"If this woman gets off, every one that has suffered before her was murdered," emphatically exclaimed Sir Archibald.

"What if they have? But none too many have suffered lately, sir," continued the Colonel. "Let this one be reprieved after the example of the others: you can begin to draw the line with the next one. If she suffers, I shall have her family upon my back, demanding

retribution. It is hard to say what horrible stories will not be concocted and blazoned forth to the world. I could not remain to face them."

"Whom have you to thank for all this?" harshly demanded Sir Archibald Devereux.

"Myself, I suppose you wish me to say," returned the son.

"I do. You have been a bad man all your life, Theodore; and unless you change wonderfully, you will die a bad one. You have brought me trouble always: I suppose you will bring it until I am in my grave. What evil possesses you?"

"Whether good or evil possesses me, it is my own look-out," was Tody Devereux's sullen answer, for he had a mortal enmity to being told of his faults; "and that is not the consideration now. Sir, you *will* save her?"

"Leave me," returned Sir Archibald. "I will reflect upon it."

"It does not need reflection, and there is no space for it," he persisted. "I don't understand the routine of these things; but if Her Majesty has to be seen, it will be a race with time. To-morrow is Sunday morning, and they are beginning to erect the scaffold."

"Theodore!" impulsively repeated Sir Archibald Devereux, "I would sooner cut off my right hand than do this."

"Give me your promise, sir, before I leave," the son continued to urge. "It will cost you nothing—only the stroke of a pen. You will retain the after consolation of knowing that, if you have erred, it was on the side of humanity."

There was a faint tinge of banter in the last sentence, which Sir Archibald Devereux detected not. In a moment of less perplexity he would have caught it fast enough. A few minutes more, and Colonel Devereux went out from his presence.

CONCLUSION.

At six o'clock on Monday morning Newgate was aroused from its stony propriety by the arrival at its gates of a state messenger. He bore a reprieve for the unhappy woman, Sophia Lyvett; and when the sheriffs and the other officials arrived at the prison, in pursuance of their functions, to attend the execution, there was no execution to attend. The mob had the worst of it, and those who had hired windows, among whom was probably Viscount Dooham; the one lost their money given in hire, and the other enjoyed a few hours' soaking, for the morning had risen pouring wet; not to speak of the disappointment, in which all alike participated. When the later editions of the daily papers reached the country towns, people made a sudden rush for them, eager to read of the last moments of Sophia Lyvett, her dying

speech and confession. Instead of which, they had the negative satisfaction of perusing the short fact of her reprieve.

The world and his wife rose up in wonder. Reprieve *her?* Why, she really *deserved* hanging! What mania was it that had laid hold of Sir Archibald Devereux? the newspapers as good as asked him.

They got no answer. They never knew. Shrouded in mystery was that unaccountable act (and entirely unaccountable save to the three or four behind the scenes, it really was), and would ever remain so.

The Lyvetts had the most cause to ask the question, for Frederick was *not* now legally relieved of the wife he had so hastily and rebelliously wedded. More than ever need did there seem to be for his hiding his head in exile.

"Keep up your heart, Frederick, my darling," said his mother, as she sobbed her farewell on his breast the morning of his departure. "We know not what blessings the future may hold in store for you. Years bring about wonderful changes: the darkest day may be succeeded by a bright morrow. You never were guilty wilfully but of that one undutiful act, and surely your punishment has been heavy; *how* heavy Heaven sees: and it is always merciful. We may have you again with us sometime, free and happy."

"And at peace," sighed poor Frederick Lyvett, in his inmost heart.

And the unhappy woman herself? Did the reprieve which she had so feverishly pressed for bring to her the relief she had sought? Was the life of labour, to which her sentence was commuted, a more tolerable fate, seen in the vista of the life stretching out before her, with its dreadful remembrance, its wearing monotony, its hopeless despair? We cannot know.

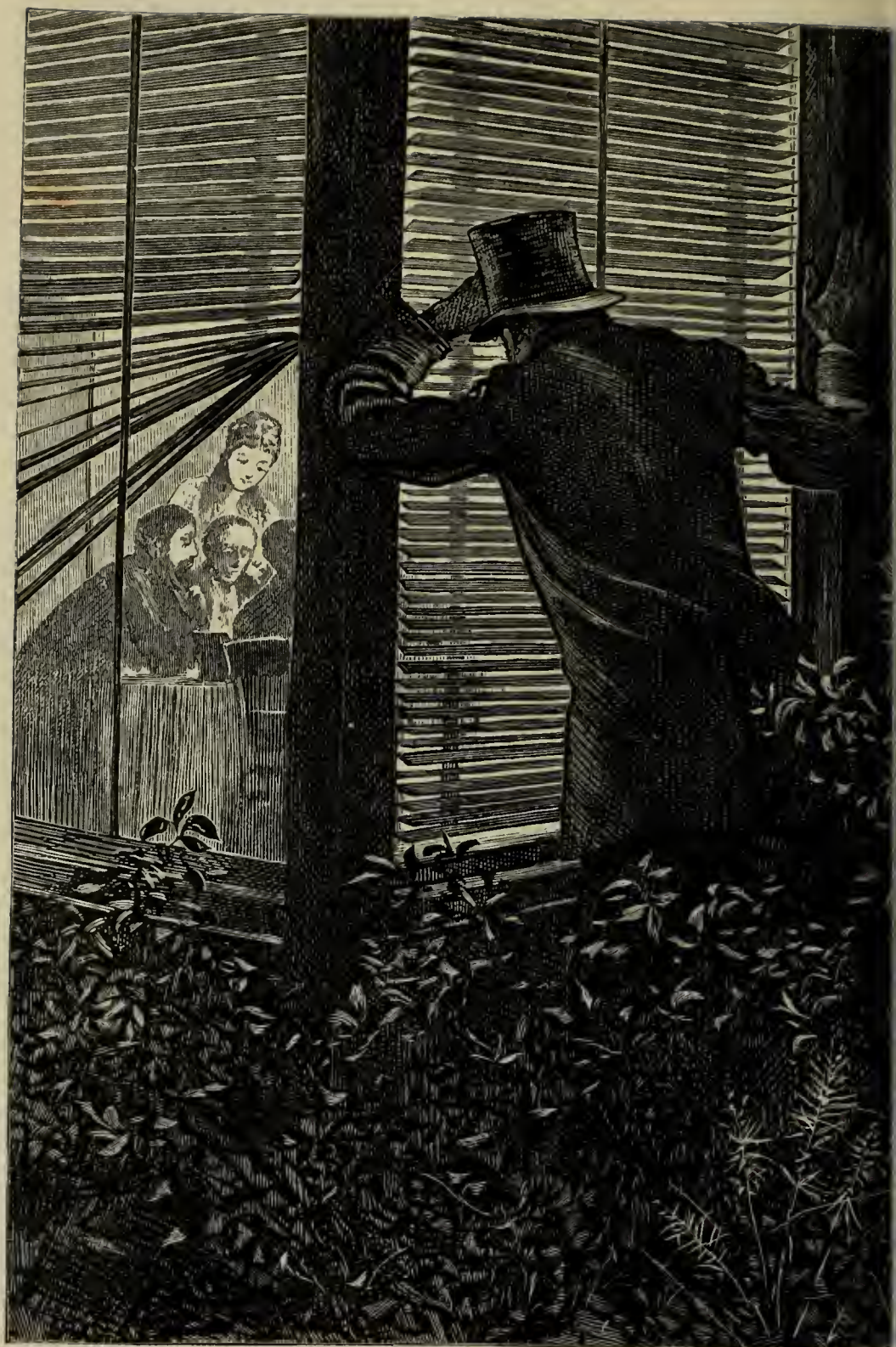
She refused to see her father and mother. Before her final departure from Newgate, permission for an interview with her was accorded to them at their earnest prayer: but she sullenly declined it.

"Oh, May," groaned the mother, in the bitterness of her anguish, as she sat on the edge of the bed in their one solitary room, "I'm afraid it was a frightful mistake."

"What was a mistake?" asked May.

"Her bringings up. If we'd not made her into a lady and edicated her according, she'd not have dispised us, and all this might never have happened. We stuck her up into a wrong spere, don't you see, May; and the poor thing seemed to have no right standing of her own. She was neither one thing nor t'other; she couldn't be one of us, and she couldn't be one of them above us; and so she had no nat'ral spere in the world to make herself contented in. It was a fatal mistake."

THE END.



A. HOPKINS. J. SWAIN.

A Secret of the Sea.

THE ARGOSY.

OCTOBER, 1875.

A SECRET OF THE SEA.

By the Author of "In the Dead of Night."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PRINGLE'S DISCOVERY.

GREAT was the glee of Jonas Pringle when he found himself left alone once more in Spur Alley. When he saw Van Duren off in a cab for Euston Square he mentally bade him good-bye for ever.

So elated was he, so sure did he now feel that the moment of success was at hand, that he went out and bought a tin of preserved lobster, and a bottle of rum, and there and then held high festival with Bakewell and his wife in their dungeon below stairs. He calculated that, at the very soonest, Van Duren need not be expected back for three or four days; and what might not be accomplished even in that short time! He could not labour much during the day at perfecting his duplicate key: he had too many interruptions: he was wanted too frequently in the office by people who called to inquire after Van Duren. But after business hours, when the hush of evening crept over the busy city, then he could work away as long as he liked without fear of interruption. And surely, after all that had gone before, a few short hours only would now be needed to place the long-coveted prize in his grasp.

All that day he remained very restless and unsettled, and seemed unable either to stay long in any one place, or to fix his mind on anything for more than a few minutes at a time. Van Duren had left him several important letters to write, but after getting as far as the date and "Dear Sir," or "Gentlemen," with one or other of them, his ideas became so mixed up and confused that he could no longer disentangle the subject of one letter from that of another in his thoughts; so that at last he had to fling down his pen in disgust, and rush off for

a quarter of an hour to a favourite haunt round the corner. Indeed, he seemed to be running in and out, all day long.

Pringle made up his mind that, if requisite, he would work away at his key all night. When Bakewell and his wife were safe in bed —and they rarely sat up after ten o'clock—he would steal downstairs without his shoes, turn on the gas, and shut himself up in the strong-room ; and there, file in hand, and a fresh bottle of rum by his side, he could work on in safety till five or six o'clock next morning.— But perhaps before that time the stubborn lock would yield and the great door fall back on its hinges, and then !—— But such a possibility was almost too much for calm consideration.

Before beginning his work for the night, he would go down to a little water-side tavern that he knew of, where the *Shipping Gazette* could always be found, together with sundry lists of vessels about to sail from London and other ports. He had not yet decided on the spot to which he should direct his flight, but he could make up his mind on that important point to-night, and pick out the names and dates of sailing of some half-dozen ships, so as to be ready for an emergency at any minute.

As it happened, however, the evening turned out so wet and stormy that Pringle was obliged to put off his proposed visit to the river-side tavern till another day. This altered his plans a little. Instead of waiting till Bakewell and his wife were in bed, as soon as he had shut the office and hurriedly swallowed a cup of tea, he went to his own room and locked himself in, and set to work at once with his file. But he was afraid to go on working too long at a time without trying the key in the lock. At any moment his file might give the one last touch, which, Pringle felt convinced, was all that his key now needed to make him at once master of the situation. So, at intervals of half an hour or so, he stole downstairs to the strong-room to try his key once more; and once more, on finding that the master-touch had not yet been given, he stole back to his own room and set to work again with a slow, quiet patience that would not know what it was to feel itself beaten.

To-night, for a wonder, it was nearly eleven before the Bakewells went to bed. As soon as he felt sure that there was no longer anything to fear from them, Pringle removed himself permanently downstairs for the night. Seating himself on a pile of books close by the iron door, he went quietly on with his work. At half-past eleven he tried the key in the lock, but, for aught he could tell to the contrary, he might have been no nearer success than he had been a month previously. He tried again as the clocks were chiming the quarter before midnight, and the wards of the lock yielded and fell back as readily and smoothly as ever they had done before Van Duren's own key. The master-touch had been given at last.

Pringle, sitting on his heap of books, stared at the open door as though he could not believe the evidence of his senses. Was it, could

it be possible that the golden prize for which he had laboured so long and so patiently was at last really within his grasp? His hands were all a-tremble, his head was burning, his mouth parched up. All at once it struck him that he felt very thirsty and that it was close upon twelve o'clock. There would be time for one, or even for two, last tumblers before the taverns closed. Where would he be before midnight should strike again? Not in London, he said to himself, but miles out at sea on his way to some far-off land.

With some such thoughts as these flitting fitfully through his mind, he mechanically lowered the gas, and then leaving the safe-door still open, but closing and locking the door of the room, he crept cautiously up the stone staircase, with his shoes in his hand, and let himself out at the front door with as little noise as possible. He had made no attempt to examine the contents of the safe. A brief glance into it had satisfied him for the time being. He knew for an undoubted fact that the money he coveted was there, and he asked to know nothing more. There was no fear that it would take to itself wings while he went to have a final glass at his favourite tavern.

The final glass was duly imbibed, and at five minutes past twelve Jonas Pringle found himself in the streets again and on his way back to Spur Alley. He was nearly at home, when suddenly his eyes fell on the figure of a woman who was standing full in the light of a street lamp, and apparently counting some money. There was something in the outline or attitude of the woman that sent a strange thrill to his heart. With a half-inarticulate cry, he hurried forward. Startled by his sudden movement, the woman looked up, and her haggard face became clearly visible in the lamplight.

"Jessie!—my daughter!" exclaimed Pringle, and he sprang forward as though he would clutch her.

"Father!" cried the woman, in a voice of shrill, sharp agony, as she suddenly flung up her arms. Then, before he could touch her, she turned and fled.

"Jessie—Jessie! Don't run away from me!" cried Pringle, as he hurried after her. But he was no match for the fleet-footed woman in front of him. By the time he got to the corner of the street he was completely exhausted, and Jessie was already out of sight. He leaned for a moment or two against the wall, with a hand pressed to his side, while he gathered breath. Then, with a bitter sigh, he retraced his way slowly towards Spur Alley. "Found at last," he muttered to himself, as he stumbled painfully along—"found at last, but only to lose her again at the moment of finding! I would have forgiven everything—yes, everything, if she would only have come back to me!" During the last few minutes, he had forgotten all about the safe and its contents, and the treasure that lay ready to his hand; but now, as he proceeded to open the street door with his latch-key, the whole situation came

back to his mind in a rush, but with a sense of strangeness as though something done by some other man, or by himself long years before.

The house was as dark and silent as a tomb. He groped his way downstairs, and presently he found himself in the strong-room again. He sat down on the heap of books, to think. To-night, of all nights in his life, he had seen again the daughter for whom he had been searching for years. He had seen her one moment, but only to lose her the next. She had fled from him, desperately determined to avoid him; and the chances were that, in that great wilderness of London, they should never meet again. His heart yearned towards her as it had never yearned before, but all her desire seemed to be to shun him. The question with him now was, whether he should take this money which lay ready to his hand, and go away for ever; or whether he should relock the safe, leaving the money untouched, and go on living his old life as if this dream of sudden wealth had never haunted his mind, and devote all his spare hours, as he had done years before, to searching for his lost child, who, as to-night had proved, was so near to him and yet so far away. The chances were that he should never see Jessie again; and even if he should succeed in finding her, he had no proof that she would not elude him again as she had done already. If only he could have felt sure of finding her, and that she would stay with him when found, not ten times the amount of money in Van Duren's safe would have tempted him to leave London, and with it his last chance of ever seeing her again.

His thoughts were all in a maze of confusion. He could not make up his mind what to do. Springing to his feet, he flung wide the door of the safe. He would at least feast his eyes on this treasure for which he had braved so much and laboured so long. There would still be time to decide afterwards what he should finally do.

There were several iron drawers in the safe, all of them unlocked. These he opened one after another. One of them was full of small bags of specie, each of which was neatly tied up and labelled, to show the value of its contents. Another drawer contained bank-notes, drafts, and bills of exchange. Other receptacles held promissory notes, bills of sale, and various documents having a bearing on Van Duren's business. Pringle paused for a moment or two while he made a rapid calculation. In gold and notes alone, the safe held upwards of three thousand pounds. His most sanguine hopes were more than realized. Should he take this money and go, or should he not? At six o'clock that very morning he could drop down the river in an outward-bound ship, and all trace of him would be lost for ever. But to leave Jessie!

There was one last drawer still to open. He drew it slowly out. It held neither gold, nor notes, nor bills of exchange. There was nothing in it but a small cedar-wood box, which box was locked. Pringle took it out of the drawer. It was very light, and not at all strong. What

could there be inside it? Why should the contents of this box be held as of more account than the gold and notes that lay openly about?—Perhaps within that little casket lay hidden some dark secret of Van Duren's life. With the aid of one of his files, which lay there on the floor, Pringle could force open the lid in a couple of minutes, and see with his own eyes what was shut up inside. No sooner thought than done—done without pausing to ask himself whether such an act would not shut him out from all possible mode of retreat. So long as the box remained intact, so long as the gold and notes remained untouched, all that he had to do was to shut and relock the door of the safe, and Van Duren need never know anything of what had happened to-night.

But the lid of the box was forced even while this thought was floating vaguely through his mind. He forced it, breaking it into two pieces as he did so. To his intense disappointment, there was nothing inside but a parcel of old letters.

Yes, at the very bottom there was something more, and yet nothing of any great consequence: only a woman's portrait. He took it up with a sneer, and moved a few steps nearer the gaslight, so as to be able to examine it more closely.

For a full minute he stood staring at the portrait without moving a muscle, with no more apparent life in him than a waxen effigy. Then he let the portrait drop as suddenly as though it had burnt him, and putting his hands to his face, he sank on his knees beside it on the floor. But not long did he remain thus. With a low cry, he started to his feet as though suddenly struck by some overwhelming thought, and hurrying across the floor, he pulled out the drawer that held the letters, and went back with it to the light. Holding the drawer under one arm, he picked out a letter here and there, opened it, read a line or two, glanced at the signature, and then put it back and took up another. Last of all, he picked up the portrait, kissed it, laid it atop of the letters, and put the drawer back into its place in the safe. Then once more he sat down to think.

What a strange and terrible discovery was that which he had just made! The likeness was Jessie's likeness, and the letters were Jessie's letters. Max Van Duren was the villain who had robbed him of his child.

Nineteen men out of twenty would have destroyed the letters of a girl for whom they had ceased to care, and whom they had cast upon the world without compunction, to starve, or die, or to live on in a way that was worse than death. But here the letters were. They had been written in the days when Jessie was his "wild rose," when she had believed him to be everything that was good and honourable; when, at his persuasion, and for love of him, she had run away from the drunken, disreputable father who seemed to value her so little, but who found out how dear the motherless girl was to his heart when he lost her for

ever. Yes; here were the letters, overflowing with sweet, girlish confidence and outspoken love. Who could tell why Van Duren had kept them? Not he himself, if anyone had put the question to him.

Jonas Pringle had need to think. He heard the City clocks strike one, as he sat on the pile of ledgers by the open door of the safe, his elbows on his knees, his face buried in his hands. He heard the City clocks strike two, and still he sat like a man turned to stone.

When, years before, he had first come to London, and had reason to believe that his daughter was hidden somewhere in the same huge wilderness, all his spare time for many weary months had been devoted to looking for her. But that could not go on for ever: and although he had long ago given up all active search for Jessie, the trick, acquired at that time, of peering up into the face of every woman who passed him in the streets, had never wholly left him. Thousands of times had he dwelt in imagination on the meeting which, he felt convinced, must one day take place between his daughter and himself—how he would snatch her to his heart and tell her that all the past was dead and forgiven. And now he had seen her, but only to find that she shunned him as though he were stricken with the plague. A thousand times had he sworn to himself that should he ever knowingly cross the path of the man who had destroyed his child, no power in heaven or on earth should balk him of his revenge. And now that by a strange chance he had crossed the path of that man, should his oaths be all forgotten, and the revenge he had promised himself nothing but an empty dream? Not so, not so.

But what form should his vengeance take? Not the poor, paltry, insignificant form of robbing this man of his gold. After what he had learned to-night, rather than take a penny of his money, he would have begged from door to door. What he wanted was, not Van Duren's money, but Van Duren's life. He would like to have seen him come home the worse for wine, and in that condition have gone to bed, and then have set fire to the house and have burnt him as he slept. He would like to have treated him as some savage tribes treat their prisoners—torturing them hour after hour, killing them by inches through a long summer day. A death that would come quickly was too good for him. Something slow and lingering, something that would make him long for death as a prisoner longs for the order for his release, would not be one whit more than he, and all such as he, deserved.

At length he heard the clocks strike four, and he knew that the bright May dawning was beginning to flood the streets with the grey and gold of another day. Then he stood up, stiff, cold, and weary, but with an intense fire burning at his heart that seemed to light him up from head to foot, and had already transformed him nto another man. He put out the gas, and leaving the safe door still

unlocked, but locking the outer door, he crept upstairs to bed. He had matured his plan; he had thought-out his scheme of revenge; everything was clearly mapped out in his mind: he could now afford to take a few hours' sleep.

He came down at his usual hour, washed, shaven, and brushed more carefully than common, and had breakfast with the Bakewells. He was very chatty and affable over the meal, and entertained them with a long and elaborate narrative of the latest murder, so that they all enjoyed themselves greatly. An hour later, after the post letters had arrived, he called Bakewell into the office.

"I have just got a letter from the governor," said Pringle, "in which he tells me that he shall not be back home for a fortnight, or even longer. So, as you and your better half will have little or nothing to do during that time, he thinks you may as well take advantage of his absence and have a run out to the seaside, or down into the country, for a couple of weeks. And what do you think he has done? He has opened his heart as I never knew him to open it before, and has actually asked me to give you five pounds towards paying your expenses while you are away. Bakewell, what a lucky dog you are!"

Bakewell was staggered by the news of his good fortune, as Pringle had perhaps intended that he should be; nor was his wife less overcome when told of it. However, they were nothing loth to go for a holiday on such terms; and so well did Pringle work upon them, and hurry forward their arrangements, that at six o'clock that evening he had the satisfaction of seeing them drive away to the station, and of finding himself left the sole inmate of the big, gloomy house in Spur Alley.

This was what he wanted. He wanted to wait there, all alone, for the return of Van Duren. He went about his business as at ordinary times, but he hardly tasted drink at all. Neither did he sleep much. Of an evening he would sit all alone in Mrs. Bakewell's underground kitchen, smoking a long clay pipe, moistening his mouth now and then with a little cold tea, and now and then smashing a stray beetle. He would sit thus, his feet perched on the chimney-piece, listening to the clocks as they struck hour after hour, thinking his own dark thoughts, and waiting for the coming of Max Van Duren.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A FOUND LETTER.

It was evening—the evening of the day on which Matthew Kelvin had sent his brief note to Dr. Whitaker, making an appointment with him for half-past eleven next morning. He had desired to be left alone for

an hour, and during that time he had contrived, with several intervals of rest, for his weakness was very great, to write a longer letter than had come from his pen since the first day of his illness. This letter, duly sealed and directed, now lay on the little table by his bedside. The address on it was very short, being simply—"Miss Lloyd, Stammars."

By-and-by Mrs. Kelvin came up into the room. As she did so, her son quietly thrust the letter under his pillow. The old lady came to the bedside, and beamed on him through her spectacles, as he lay there with his arms crossed under his head. "Why, Matthew, my dear boy, I have not seen you look so bright and well for many a long day as you have looked during the last few hours! You have got the turn at last. I feel sure you have. I knew that Dr. Druce would bring you round again after a time."

"Yes, mother, I think I have got the turn at last, as you say," answered Kelvin, gravely. "We will never let anyone say a word against Dr. Druce again, will we?"

"Ah, he's very, very clever," said the old lady. Then she stooped and kissed him, and as she did so, Matthew's arm stole round her neck, and pressed her head gently on his shoulder, and kept it there some minutes. When he let her go, she saw that there were tears in his eyes; but she was too wise to notice them, and she began at once to talk as though his recovery now were merely the question of a few days, or a week at the most.

"But I shall not let you go back to business till you are quite strong," she said. "Don't tell me that your not doing so will cost you a great deal of money. I don't care if it costs a thousand pounds: what is that in comparison with your health? You must have a month at the seaside, at some cheerful place—Boulogne or Dieppe, where you won't have time to grow melancholy. And if Olive and I go with you, we shall not bore you overmuch with our society, but only be there to see that you take proper care of yourself, and do not poison yourself with those French dinners of which you are so fond."

"I'm sure Olive deserves a holiday as much as anyone," resumed Mrs. Kelvin, a moment or two later. "What I should have done without her all this long time that you have been ill, I'm sure I don't know. She must be very fond of you, Matthew, to have done what she has done. Now, don't you think she is fond of you?"

"Yes, I suppose she is fond of me—after a cousinly fashion," said Matthew, coldly.

"Ah! you men!" sighed the old lady. "Whatever sacrifices a woman may make for you, in your own hearts you never think they are half as much as you deserve."

At this moment there came a tap at the door, and Olive entered the room. She brought her cousin a basin of arrowroot, which he, re-

membering his promise to Dr. Whitaker, resolved not to touch. His eyes followed her curiously as she moved about the room. "I cannot —no, I cannot believe it!" he murmured under his breath. "There must be some damnable mistake somewhere."

"I have just been telling Matthew that I have not seen him look so well for weeks as he looks to-night," said Mrs. Kelvin to Olive. "We shall soon have have him all right again now."

Olive started, and threw a quick, suspicious glance at the sick man. He was looking at her very gravely but very kindly as she thought. "No: he suspects nothing, or he would not look at me in that way," she said to herself. Then her black brows separated and her face broke into a smile. "I really believe he is better," she said to her aunt. "I believe he has only been shamming all this time, and now he is getting tired of it. I should not be a bit surprised to see him come down to breakfast to-morrow."

"I'd almost stake my life that Whitaker is making some strange blunder!" muttered Kelvin to himself. "However, I'll carry out his instructions, and let to-morrow prove to him how wrong he is."

Olive was anxious that he should drink his arrowroot. He just put a spoonful to his lips, and then put it aside as being too hot. "Come in again after my mother has gone," he contrived to whisper to her. Then he lay back and shut his eyes, and presently both his mother and Olive bade him good night and left the room.

As soon as Mrs. Kelvin was gone to her own room, Olive came quietly back. She was on the tip-toe of expectation to know what her cousin could have to say to her. He did not keep her long in doubt.

"Olive," he said, "I have been writing a letter this evening—a letter which I want you to deliver for me to-morrow morning."

"Very well, Matthew. You know that I am entirely at your service. To whom is the letter addressed?"

"To Eleanor Lloyd."

"Ah!—then you have made up your mind at last to tell her everything?"

"I have made up my mind to tell her this: that I have discovered that she is not the daughter of Jacob Lloyd, and, consequently, not entitled to his property. But I have not made up my mind to tell her that I've known this fact for more than six months, and have concealed it purposely from her. I cannot tell her that."

"But why do you wish me to take the letter? Why not send through the post?"

"Because I am too weak at present to put down in writing more than the barest outline of the facts, and I want you to supplement by word of mouth what my letter fails to convey."

"Why not wait till you are a little stronger—till you can tell her, in person, all that it is necessary she should be told?"

"Not one day longer will I wait. Eleanor Lloyd shall know the great secret of her life before she is twenty-four hours older."

"As you will. Perhaps you are right," said Olive, quietly. "There is no reason why Miss Lloyd should be kept in ignorance any longer."

"None whatever. I don't remember anything in my life that I have ever regretted so bitterly as not having told Eleanor at first. But it is useless to speak of the past. The future is all we can now deal with."

"Then your feeling of resentment towards Miss Lloyd has an existence no longer?"

"It is wholly dead. A sick-bed alters one's views and feelings in many ways. How can a man have room in his heart for any petty jealousies or resentments when he sees the shades of death closing slowly round him? To me all such feelings now seem as strange as though they were those of another man, about which I had read somewhere, and had never been a portion of my own inner life."

Olive longed to ask him whether his love for Eleanor was dead equally with his resentment, but she was afraid that the old wound might not yet be altogether healed.

"Then you wish me to go to Stammars to-morrow?" she said.

"I do. Miss Lloyd is there at present. I had a letter from Sir Thomas this morning, in which he casually mentions that fact. You had better start early—not later than ten or half-past, by which means you will get your business over by luncheon time. Of course you will seek a private interview with Miss Lloyd, and not say a word to either Sir Thomas or Lady Dudgeon about your errand. Eleanor must be left to break the news to them in her own way and at her own time."

"It will be a bitter task to have to do so."

"It will indeed, poor girl! Cannot you understand, Olive, my chief reason for wanting you to go to Stammars?"

"You have told me already, have you not?"

"I have told you one reason, but not the only one. You are a woman, Olive, and I want you to break this news to Eleanor, to whom, in any case, it must come as a terrible shock. You do not like her, I know—at least, I judge so from what you have said at different times. But this is not a question of likes or dislikes. It is a question of one woman being overwhelmed by a great trouble, and of another woman smoothing away the sharp edge of that trouble with a little sympathy and kindness—articles which cost so little, but, at such seasons, mean so much. This is all I ask you to do, Olive; this is my other reason for sending you to Stammars. Am I asking more than you care to perform?"

"Certainly not, Matthew. It is not much that you ask me to do."

"But it means a great deal."

"How little men understand about us women!" thought Olive.

"None of my own sex, who knew the circumstances of the case, would ever have dreamed of asking me to do what Matthew has asked me to do, and believes I will do."

"Think what a revelation my letter will be!" continued the lawyer. "At one fell blow she will be robbed of name, wealth, and position. Think, and pity her."

He lay back, exhausted by the exertion of having spoken so much.

"What can I give you?" asked Olive. "Will you not have your arrowroot?"

"No: I will take that later on. A little weak brandy-and-water is all I need at present."

"And now I must bid you good night," said Olive, as soon as he had revived a little.

He put the letter into her hand, and as he did so he drew her towards him and kissed her. "I should like you to start about ten in the morning," he said. She promised to be ready by that time, and then she went.

"Whitaker's suspicion is nothing but a horrible nightmare," he said to himself, as Olive left the room. "He is wrong—utterly wrong." But for all that, Matthew Kelvin hardly slept a wink all night.

Olive took the letter to her room, locked the door, and then, after deliberating for a few moments, she quietly tore open the envelope and read what was inside. "If it be requisite to deliver the letter, I can put it into another envelope, and no one will be any the wiser," she said to herself. "If I decide not to deliver it, then another envelope will not be needed."

"A thoroughly business-like document," she said to herself as she folded up the letter, "and such as any lawyer might write to any lady. If there is no resentment in it, neither is there any love. The resentment is dead without a doubt, but is the love dead also? Query. Well, I will take the letter with me: there will be no harm in doing that: but it by no means follows that Miss Lloyd will ever read it. How easy it will be to pretend that I have lost it, and then I can tell the story my own way—with a sting in it, and before witnesses too, if such thing be anyhow possible. Oh! to see her humiliation! that will pay for everything."

She was up betimes next morning, and ready to start for Stammars soon after ten o'clock. In answer to her anxious inquiries, her cousin declared that he was much as usual—neither better nor worse. "You will try your best to soften the blow, won't you, Olive?" were Matthew's last words to her.

"You know that I will do my best," she said, with one of her faint smiles. She laid her thin fingers in his hand for a moment, and then she went.

By-and-by came Dr. Whitaker. Pod succeeded in smuggling him

upstairs unseen by anyone, and then took up a position in the corridor outside to keep away any would-be intruders. Mrs. Kelvin, especially, was to be kept out of the room. Were she to find out that her son was closeted with Dr. Whitaker, she would imagine at once that there was a conspiracy afoot to dispense with the services of her favourite, Dr. Druce. Fortunately she was busy downstairs just about that time, and did not go near. Matthew had said that he fancied a certain sort of pudding—an elaborate pudding, which Mrs. Kelvin was positive that no one but herself could make properly—a pudding, as her son was quite aware, that would require her undivided attention for at least a couple of hours below stairs.

Mr. Pod Piper, keeping watch and ward outside his master's door, had a long corridor all to himself, up and down which he could march as though he were a sentry on duty. After a time, from a door at the extreme end, there issued a pert-looking damsel, who smiled sweetly on Pod. In one hand she carried a broom, in the other a dust-pan.

"Ah, Molly, and how are you this morning?" said Pod, with the air of a duke addressing a dependent. "Blooming as ever, I see."

"I'm quite well, Mr. Piper, and I hope you are the same," answered Molly, with a little blush. Then she added, with a confidential air, "I've got such a beautiful rose downstairs. You shall have it for your button-hole, if you'll promise to wear it."

"I'll wear it for your sake, Molly. But whose room is that that you have just come out of?"

"Oh, that's Miss Deane's room. I've just been tidying it up a bit while she's out of the way."

"You like her, of course? Everybody likes Miss Deane."

"Then everybody's welcome to like her.—She's too sly for me.—But, see, I found this letter when I was sweeping just now behind her dressing-table. It must have slipped down without her knowing it. It's been opened; but as it's got master's name on it, I hardly know whether to leave it where I found it or to let master have it."

"Allow me," said Pod, authoritatively, taking the letter from the girl's hand. "You were quite right, Molly, to ask my advice." As Molly had said, the letter was plainly addressed to Mr. Kelvin, and it had evidently been opened. As two-thirds of the office correspondence was seen by Pod in one form or another, and as this particular letter was not marked "Private," he felt no compunction about opening it and reading it. It was Gerald Warburton's first letter, in which he asked whether it was true that Jacob Lloyd had died without a will, and that he was his uncle's heir.

Pod's mind was made up in a moment. It seemed doubtful whether his master had ever seen that letter: in any case, he should see it now. "You had better leave this in my hands, Molly," he said, still with his ducal air. "It is only an ordinary business letter, which has

been given to Miss Deane for some purpose, and which she has evidently mislaid. You may depend upon my making it all right, and there will be no need for you to say a word about it." Then he kissed Molly and told her not to forget the rose, and then he let her go.

"Another of your little tricks, Miss Deane, or else I'm vastly mistaken," said Mr. Piper to himself. "This letter has been cut open with a pair of scissors. The governor never cut open a letter with a pair of scissors in his life. Funny, very."

Pod's watch came to an end in about an hour. He was summoned into the room, and, much to his surprise, found his master dressed and sitting in his easy-chair. How gaunt and hollow-eyed he looked! What a wreck of his former self! How loose his clothes hung about him! Tears came into Pod's eyes as he looked at him. All Kelvin's sternness and arbitrary ways were forgotten in pity for the plight in which he saw him now. Dr. Whitaker, with his arms folded on the table, was regarding him attentively.

"Piper," said Mr. Kelvin, "I want you to let Dr. Whitaker out, and you must contrive it so that my mother does not see him."

"Yes, sir."

"After that, you will come and help me to crawl downstairs as far as my mother's sitting-room."

"Yes, sir."

Dr. Whitaker rose and took his hat. "Beg pardon, sir," said Pod to his master, "but here's a letter which Molly the housemaid gave me just now. She found it in Miss Deane's room while sweeping behind the dressing-table. As the letter is addressed to you, I thought I had better let you have it."

Kelvin took the letter with hands that trembled a little, and looked first of all at the direction, and then at the mode in which the letter had been opened. Dr. Whitaker came forward to shake hands. "Don't go for a minute or two," said Kelvin. "There is something else I want to say to you."

Dr. Whitaker sat down again, and Kelvin drew out the letter and glanced first of all at the signature. He started when he saw the name, and then he ran his eye quickly over the contents; last of all he read the letter through, slowly and carefully.

"This is dated nearly a month ago," he said, "and yet I have never seen it till to-day. It has been kept purposely from me. By what a web of treachery and deceit am I enmeshed! It is horrible—horrible!" He sat for a little while in silence, holding the letter in his hand, his eyes bent sadly on the floor. No one spoke.

"Whitaker," he said at last, turning abruptly on the doctor, "I want to go to Stammars."

"To Stammars! When?"

"Now—at once."

"Impossible! I would not answer for the consequences of such a mad act."

"Whatever the consequences may be, I must go, and at once. Piper, run to the King's Head, and order a brougham to be here in ten minutes from now." Pod was off like a shot.

"Kelvin, you must be crazy to do this thing."

"Perhaps so, my friend, but still I shall do it. During the last half-hour it seems as if the scales had fallen from my eyes. I seem now to see that woman as she really is—not as I have always believed her to be. I sent her to Stammars this morning with a message of the utmost importance. How will she deliver that message? Not as I asked her to deliver it, but—— What a fool I must have been to send her on such an errand! I tell you, Whitaker, that I must go after her: that there is not a minute to lose."

"If you must go, you must, but in that case I shall go with you."

And in that way the matter was settled. Dr. Whitaker, finding that further opposition was useless, yielded the point, but was determined not to lose sight of Kelvin till he had seen him safely back in his own room. A quarter of an hour later the brougham came round. Kelvin managed to crawl downstairs, a step at a time, snpported on each side by Whitaker and Pod. Mrs. Kelvin, being still busy with her pudding in the back part of the house, knew nothing of all this. Matthew sent her a message by Mr. Bray, his chief clerk; but it was not to be given to her till after the brougham had started.

Then Pod climbed on to the box beside the driver, and away they went.

CHAPTER XXX.

VAN DUREN IN WALES.

In the dusk of a sweet May evening a man slipped quietly out of the back door of the Ring of Bells tavern—a low public-house frequented chiefly by fishermen and labourers, in the village of Marhyddoc, and shunning the more frequented neighbourhoods, found himself presently in a pretty winding lane that seemed to lead to nowhere in particular, and was quite given over to solitude. Here the man sat down for a while on the trunk of a fallen tree. The house had become intolerable to him: he could stay in it no longer; so he had strolled out to this quiet nook, there to wait till dusk had deepened into dark. Not without difficulty would even Jonas Pringle have recognized in this man Max Van Duren. Hands and face had been stained till they were the colour of a mulatto's, and his hair had been dyed jet black. He had only been twelve hours in Marhyddoc, but he had already found out a great deal that it behoved him to know. Fortunately for Van Duren,

the landlord of the Ring of Bells spoke very tolerable English, and was very fond of airing his accomplishment, besides being naturally of a garrulous turn of mind. As a consequence, Van Duren had very soon extracted from him all that he had to tell—more than enough to confirm his worst fears.

In the portraits which the landlord drew of two of the strangers who were staying at the big hotel on the cliff, he had no difficulty in recognizing Byrne and Miriam. He could no longer doubt that he had been duped by these two; that they had only hired his rooms, and wormed themselves into his confidence, in order to extract from him a secret which, up to that time, he could have sworn would never be whispered by him in mortal ears. And they had succeeded but too well. What a weak fool he had been! How easily that girl had twined him round her finger! How well he could see the sneer that would curve her beautiful lips when she spoke of him to her father! He hated her now with as much intensity as he had loved her before. Had Miriam Byrne come walking down that lane in the May twilight—had she and Max Van Duren met face to face with no third person by, the chances that her father would ever have seen his daughter alive again would have been very problematical indeed.

But with Byrne and his daughter at the hotel was another individual, according to the landlord's account—an elderly gentleman, whom Van Duren altogether failed to recognize. Not that he was greatly troubled thereby: he had far more important matters to occupy his thoughts.

Then the landlord had other news—news that he was in no wise loth to impart, that for Van Duren was full of intense significance. He knew all about the divers and their strange apparatus and dresses. He told his hearer how, in the first place, some one had come down to Marhyddoc, and, after some difficulty, had found out the exact spot where the schooner *Albatross* had foundered twenty years before. The place was then marked with a buoy, and soon after that the divers had come. Everybody in the village had asked themselves what there was in the cargo of the *Albatross* that could be worth the trouble and expense of recovery after having been for twenty years at the bottom of the sea: and for a long time the question asked by everybody had remained unanswered. But at last it had oozed out, nobody seemed to know exactly how, that the particular object for which the divers were instructed to search was a small oaken box, clamped with silver. The box was said by some to contain certain documents and title-deeds of immense value, for lack of which the rightful heir to a great property had been kept out of his own for years. Others knew for a fact that the box was full of sovereigns which were being sent out to America to buy slaves with. Others there were who averred that inside the silver-clamped box would be found the evidence of a terrible murder that had remained undetected all this long time.

"But of course they have not succeeded in finding the box?" Van Duren had said to the landlord, burning with a terrible anxiety to know the worst.

"But they have. Yes, indeed," said the man, with a chuckle. Van Duren, on hearing this, got up abruptly and went to the window. His face was ghastly; his mouth twitched nervously in a way that he could not control; his staring eyes saw nothing that was before them. "The divers had been down three times without success," continued the man. "They went down again very early this morning, and in less than an hour they found the box. I saw it with my own eyes when they came ashore:—a small oak box, clamped at the corners, and with two letters on the lid."

Van Duren tried to speak, but he was like a man under the influence of a nightmare. The words died away in his parched-up throat. Happily the landlord took his listener's silence as a sign that his narrative was interesting, and went on without noticing him.

"When the box was brought ashore it was given into the custody of John Williams, the policeman. Yes, indeed. John took it up to the hotel on the cliff where the gentlemen are staying, and there he waited with the box on his knee till Mr. Davies of St. Owens, who is a magistrate, came, three hours later, and then they all went into a room together, the divers and the gentlemen, and the door was locked and there the box was opened."

Van Duren would have liked to say, "And what did they find in the box when they opened it?" but not for the life of him could he have put the question. He knew quite well—no one better—what would be found in the box; but none the less did he hunger to hear every detail from the landlord's lips. However, he had only to wait and say nothing; his host's natural garrulity would do the rest.

"Whether they found title-deeds in the box, or whether they found sovereigns, or whether they found anything at all, is more than I can exactly say. John Williams, the policeman, for all he's my own cousin's nephew, and I treated him to three glasses of brandy after he came down from the hotel, only shook his head and wouldn't say a word, though he knew very well that I wouldn't have whispered it to a soul. No, indeed. But John Williams will have no more of my brandy without paying for it like any other man."

Such was the story told Max Van Duren in the little Welsh inn. His worst fears were realized. The sea had given up its secret. Everything was known. He was stunned by the blow, and seemed for the time being to have lost all power of cool thought, all possibility of looking his position steadily in the face and of deciding as to what steps it behoved him to take next.

But even through the midst of the vague, unreasoning terror that now possessed him—through the ghastly dread that now held him

as with a hand of iron, he could not help wondering by what means, through what special agencies, this unlooked-for and terrible result had been brought about. Who forged the first link of evidence tending to implicate him in a crime committed so long ago that at times it almost seemed as if no such deed had ever really been done—as if it were nothing more than a distempered dream of his own imagining? What first induced Byrne and Miriam to come to his house and worm themselves into his confidence on purpose to elicit from him the particulars of the shipwreck of the *Albatross?* How did Byrne first come to connect him, Max Van Duren, with the murder of Paul Stilling? And, which was more mysterious still, whence and how did he derive the knowledge which enabled him to connect the story of the shipwreck with that crime? Never once during all the intervening years had Van Duren troubled himself to make any inquiry after Ambrose Murray. He had never cared to ascertain whether the man he had so foully wronged were alive or dead, whether he had been pardoned and set at liberty, or whether he was still shut up in his living tomb. But now, to-day, it did occur to him to ask himself whether it was in any way possible that it was the hand of Ambrose Murray which had linked together the fatal chain of evidence—a chain that would prove strong enough to hang him unless he took particular care what he was about. But he scouted the idea almost as soon as it came to him. If Ambrose Murray were still alive, it was merely as a harmless lunatic—as a melancholy madman whom one night perhaps afford to pity, but could certainly have no cause to fear.

But it was certainly not the hand of a harmless lunatic that was at the bottom of this plot to bring his long-hidden guilt home to him. It was the hand, rather, of a man as strong, cunning, and unscrupulous as himself—a hand that, so far, had won every point of the game against him—a hand that would succeed in tying a halter firmly round his neck, unless—unless what? he asked himself, with a mixture of terror and despair. He did not know who his enemy was, where to look for him, or how best to confront him. He had got a sort of vague notion in his mind that Byrne was merely the puppet of a firmer will and a stronger hand; that his real enemy was lurking out of sight in the background, weaving round him, thread by thread, the meshes of a net from which in the end he would find it impossible to escape.

Not till dusk had fairly set in did Van Duren venture outside the inn door. He seemed to have lost his appetite entirely; but he kept up his strength, and in some small way his courage also, by repeated doses of the inn's fiery spirits. When, at last, he did leave the house, he had no settled intention in doing so. The place for hours had been full of noisy, half-drunken company; all of whom, he could not help hearing through the thin lath-and-plaster wall that divided his room from the tap-room, were loudly discussing some important topic in their native

Welsh. That topic, as the landlord took care to inform him more than once, was neither more nor less than the finding of the long-sought-for box by the divers. At last he felt that he must either leave the house or go mad. So he wandered out into a quiet lane at the back of the village, and there sat down on the trunk of a felled tree.

What should he do? What ought his next step to be? His mind was all in a maze of doubt and terror and perplexity. Should he hurry off to London by the first train, secure all his available property, shut up his house in Spur Alley, and drop quietly out of sight where no possible search for him could be made? Or should he stay and brave out everything?

Presently he began to feel very lonely among the dim shadows of the silent lane. He fancied that he heard voices whispering, and the faint rustle of garments, as if some one were watching him stealthily through the foliage at his back. He looked round with a shudder, and then he rose and walked swiftly forward. In a little while the lane took him to a rising ground that overlooked the village and the sea. On his right, and no great distance away, rose the cliff on the summit of which was built the hotel where Byrne and Miriam were staying. Several of the windows were lighted up. Which were the windows of Miriam's room, he wondered? In the midst of all his doubt and fears for his own safety, he could not help thinking about the girl who had played such a short but important part in the strange dream of his life. He had no bitterer thought even at this bitter hour than the knowledge that this girl, whom he had learnt to love so passionately, had not only never cared for him, but had duped him from the very first; that all her smiles and looks and words had been utterly false; that it was her hand, and hers alone, that had struck him down; that but for her, no harm could have happened to him; that but for her, the silver-clamped box, with its damning evidence, would have rested till doomsday at the bottom of the sea.

Without knowing or caring whither it might lead him, he had unconsciously taken a footpath which brought him presently to a little side wicket that opened into the grounds of the hotel. From the wicket a winding path led upward through thick clumps of evergreens and brushwood to the house. There was for him, in his present mood, a sort of fascination, a grim satisfaction, in the thought of being so near these cunning enemies of his, who seemed so thoroughly bent on hunting him down, while all the time they believed him to be hundreds of miles away. He had little or no sense of present fear upon him. His dread lay in the unknown future. The next blow that would be struck at him would not be struck at him here, but in London. So long as these people stayed in Wales, he was safe. They had done their worst for a little time to come.

He passed through the wicket, but as soon as he found himself in

the grounds of the hotel, he diverged from the pathway on to the grass where his footsteps were inaudible, and where the evergreens would shelter him from the view of any passer-by. But perfect quiet reigned around: not a sign of life was anywhere visible. No portion of the hotel could be seen from where he was now, but he knew in which direction it lay; and without knowing or caring to think why he did so, he kept pressing slowly forward and upward, till at length he emerged from the shrubbery into a more open part of the grounds, and there in the starlight he could see the big white building straight before him.

On one side, the hotel was built close up to the edge of the cliff, which here sloped down to the beach, and the base of which was washed by every tide. Huge boulders and jagged pieces of rock protruded here and there from the face of the cliff; but these rugged features were softened and harmonised by the numerous tufts of broom and dwarf brushwood that grew among and around them, and by the soft, green mosses and many-coloured lichens that nestled between them, and crept lovingly over them, and made them beautiful with a beauty that was other than their own. Up the face of this cliff a goat or a chamois might probably have climbed by leaping from rock to rock, or from one clump of brushwood to another; but no human foot had ever been known to venture up or down it.

It was now dark, and these more minute features of the scene were invisible to Max Van Duren. All that he could discern was, that the hotel was built close to the edge of the cliff, at the bottom of which cliff the tide was now washing heavily in with the noise of low thunder.

Having satisfied himself that there was no one about, Van Duren left the shelter of the shrubbery through which he had hitherto crept, and swiftly crossing the intervening open space, he sought the shelter of another fringe of shrubbery which grew between the gradually rising edge of the cliff and the carriage-drive that led up to the main entrance of the hotel. Keeping well within the shade of the evergreens, and climbing higher step by step, a few minutes more brought him close up to one corner of the house. It was now requisite to move with extreme caution. Suddenly he heard the sound of voices, and two or three loud good-nights. Some one was evidently leaving the hotel, and would pass close by him in a few moments. It would never do to be found there; so he plunged deeper into the shrubbery, and presently found himself close to one of the lighted windows that he had seen from the valley below. He hardly knew whether to advance or retire. The question was, Who were the occupants of the room? If strangers only, he would go quietly back by the way he had come; but if there was a chance of seeing Miriam—well, to see her again, he was prepared to risk much. He hated her, or fancied that he did, and yet there was still a strange fascination for him in the thought that he was close to her, that he was only separated from her by the thickness of a wall.

Had he met her there alone in the shrubbery, he would have strangled her, but after that he would have kissed her and wept over her, and would probably have ended all by jumping over the cliff.

He crept close up to the window and peered through the venetians. Fortunately for his purpose, they were not very closely drawn, and he could see into the room without difficulty. It was a large room, and was lighted by another window opposite to that through which Van Duren was now looking. This second window—a French one, by the way—was wide open, for the evening was somewhat sultry. Beyond it was a small balcony, and then the cliff, and, a hundred feet below, the white-tipped waves. Round a table in the middle of the room, four gentlemen were seated in earnest conversation. Three of them Van Duren had never seen before, but in the fourth he had no difficulty in recognizing his quondam lodger, Mr. Peter Byrne. It is true that the white locks, the hump, and the general air of feebleness and decrepitude, had all disappeared; but Byrne's strongly-marked features could not be mistaken for those of any other man. But hardly had Van Duren time to notice all this, before his eyes were drawn to and concentrated on an object that was standing on the middle of the table. He shuddered from head to foot, and turned suddenly sick as he looked. He had recognized the object in a moment. It was the silver-clamped box which the divers had brought up from the bottom of the sea: it was the box for the sake of which Paul Stilling had been stabbed in his sleep.

Was the box full or empty? The lid was open, but Van Duren could not see inside. Anyhow, there was the box. What a host of terrible memories the sight of it called up in his mind! Trifling circumstances, half-forgotten, and that he had thrust persistently from his memory years ago, came back now with the vivid clearness of a photograph. Stilling's drunken laugh, the peculiar nervous twitching of his left eye, the broken nail on one of his fingers, the very patch on one of his boots, quizzically commented on by him as he was pulling on his slippers in front of the fire—how they all came back to Van Duren! As he stood there, it seemed to him but a few yesterdays, instead of twenty long years, since ——

He drew out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead, and shut out the sight for a moment. When he looked again, Miriam was there. She was bending over the back of her father's chair and saying something in his ear. She had never looked sweeter, in Van Duren's eyes, than she looked to-night, with her soft flowing grenadine dress, and her bows of ribbon here and there, and a tea-rose in her hair.

He would have given all he had in the world, everything save life itself, to have called this girl his own and have won one smile of real love from her beautiful lips. Presently she lifted up a face that was radiant with smiles, then she pinched her father's ear playfully, and

turned and left the room. And that was the last time that Max Van Duren ever set eyes on Miriam Byrne.

A few minutes later, the four gentlemen rose and left the room. They left the box behind them, still standing wide open in the middle of the table. From this Van Duren at once concluded that it must have been emptied of its contents. Had it not, they would hardly have left it there unguarded. Then all at once the thought struck Van Duren that if he could only obtain possession of the box, if he could only steal it away unknown to anyone, then would his enemies be deprived of the strongest link in their evidence against him—perhaps the only link of any value in a court of justice. The box could undoubtedly be sworn to as being that which had at one time belonged to Paul Stilling; but could the contents of the box, after twenty years' immersion in the sea, be sworn to with equal certainty? To him that seemed very doubtful indeed. In any case, the chain of evidence against him would certainly be weakened in a material degree should the box not be producible by the prosecution. It would be worth risking much to obtain it. There it was, within a few yards of him, in an empty room: why should he not take possession of it again, as he had done once before, long years ago? Not a sound could anywhere be heard save the low thunder of the incoming tide. But how was it possible for him to get into the room, unseen and unheard? He tried the sash of the window against which he was standing. Fortunately for his purpose, it proved to be unfastened. All that he had to do was to push up the sash sufficiently high, climb over the low window-sill, thrust aside the venetians, and there he would be—the box within reach of his hand. Five minutes would suffice for everything. If only he could make sure that no one would enter the room for five short minutes! But of that he could by no means make sure: he must run the risk of it. But even while these thoughts were in his mind, his hands had been busy with the window, and almost before he knew what had happened, he found that he had pushed up the sash high enough to admit of his ingress to the room.

A minute later, and his hand was on the box. Even at such a moment as that it thrilled him strangely to touch it. He glanced into it: it was empty, as he had felt sure that it would be. Then he shut down the lid, and taking up the box, he placed it under his arm and turned to go. But at this instant the door was quickly opened, and some one came into the room. Van Duren turned instinctively, and as his eyes met those of the man who had entered, he gave utterance to a low cry of terror and surprise.

There before him stood the man whom he had so terribly wronged—whom he had consigned without remorse to a living tomb—who would have become the hangman's prey had not his brain been too weak to bear the burden of his doom. This man, then, it was,

who he had fondly believed in his heart must have died long ago—this man it was, who, like a sleuth-hound, was now on his track, determined to hunt him down without mercy and without ruth. Ambrose Murray was now but a wreck of his former self, but Max Van Duren knew him again the moment his eyes fell on him.

Murray, in his turn, did not fail to recognise Van Duren. "Wretch! what do you here?" he exclaimed, as he advanced into the room. His right hand was buried in the breast of his frock-coat—an habitual action with him; but Van Duren took it at once that his fingers were grasping some hidden weapon, and as Murray advanced he fell back step by step.

He did not answer Murray's question. He seemed, indeed, as though he had not heard it. His face was ashy pale. Surprise, and terror, and anger seemed to glare out of his eyes in turn; but still he did not speak.

On first entering the room, Murray had not missed the box; but now his eyes travelled from Van Duren to the table, and then back again, and he understood everything.

"Villain! bloodthirsty villain!" he cried. "Would you steal that box a second time?" and with that he took two or three rapid strides towards Van Duren.

But the other, still without answering, and still facing his enemy, fell quickly back. Murray was now between him and the window by which he had entered; but he seemed to remember that there was another window behind him, and it was towards this that he was now making his way. He still evidently suspected that Murray's hand held a pistol, and that he might be fired at, any moment.

The latter continued to advance. "Max Jacoby, I have you at last, and this time you shall not escape me!" he exclaimed, and therewith he strode swiftly to the bell-rope and pulled it violently.

But at the first sound of the bell, Van Duren turned quickly and made for the open French window. Before Murray had time to utter a single word of warning, he was on the balcony. Next moment his hand grasped the railing, and with a loud, mocking laugh he vaulted over and disappeared in the black darkness below. He had either not known, or had forgotten, that the balcony was built immediately over the edge of the cliff.

A few moments later, Peter Byrne and two or three others hurried into the room in response to the bell's imperative summons. Ambrose Murray was lying senseless on the floor, and the silver-clamped box was no longer there.

(*To be continued.*)

CHANDLER AND CHANDLER.

JACOB CHANDLER, solicitor, conveyancer, and land-agent, had died: and his son Valentine (possibly taking a leaf out of the history of Jonas Chuzzlewit) determined that he should at least be borne to the grave with honours, if he had never had an opportunity to specially bear them in life. Crabb churchyard was a show of mutes and plumes, and Crabb highway was blocked up with black coaches. As it is considered a compliment down with us to get an invitation to a funeral, and a great slight on the dead to refuse it, all classes, from Sir John Whitney, down to Massock, the brickmaker, and little Farmer Bean, responded to Valentine Chandler's notes. Some people said that it was Valentine's mother, the new widow, who wished for so much display; and probably they were right.

It took place on a Saturday. I can see the blue sky overhead now, and the bright sun that shone upon the scene and lighted up the feathers. It was thought he must have died rich, and that the three daughters he left would have good portions. His son Valentine had the practice: so, at any rate, *he* was provided for. Tom Chandler, the nephew, made one of the mourners: and the spectators talked freely enough in an undertone, as he passed them in his place when the procession walked up the churchyard path. It seemed but the other day, they said, that his poor father was buried, killed by that lamentable accident. Time flew. Years passed imperceptibly. But Jacob—lying so still under that black and white pall, now slowly disappearing within the church—had not done the right thing by his dead brother's son. The practice had been made by Thomas, the elder brother. Thomas took Jacob into full partnership without fee or recompense; and there was an understanding entered into between them later (but no legal agreement) that if the life of either failed his son should succeed to his post. If Thomas, the elder, died, his son Tom was to take his father's place as senior partner in due time. Thomas did die; died suddenly; but from that hour to this, Jacob had never attempted to carry out the agreement: he had taken his own son, Valentine, into partnership, but not Tom. And Crabb knew, both North and South, for such things get about curiously, that the injustice had troubled Jacob when he was dying, and that he had charged Valentine to remedy it.

Sunday morning was not so fine: leaden clouds, threatening rain, had overshadowed the summer sky. But all the family mourners came to

church, Valentine wearing his long crape hat-band and shoulder scarf (for that was our custom); the widow in her costly mourning, and the three girls in theirs. The mourning was furnished, Miss Timmens took the opportunity of whispering to Mrs. Todhetley, from a fashionable black shop at Worcester: and, to judge by the frillings and furbelows, very fashionable indeed the shop must have been. Mrs. Chandler and her son Tom sat together in their own pew, Mrs. Cramp, Jacob's sister, with them. It chanced that we were staying at Crabb Cot at the time of Jacob's death, just as we had been at Thomas's, and so saw the doings and heard the sayings, and the Squire was at hand for both funerals.

The next morning, Monday, Valentine Chandler took his place in the office as master for the first time, and seated himself in his late father's chair in the private room. He and his mother had already held some conversation as to arrangements for the future. Valentine said he should live at the office at Islip: now that there was only himself he should have more to do, and did not want the bother of walking or driving to and fro morning and evening. She would live entirely at North Villa.

Valentine took his place in his father's room; and the clerks, who had been hail-fellow-well-met with him hitherto, put on respect of manner, and called him Mr. Chandler. Tom had an errand to do every Monday morning connected with the business, and did not enter until nearly eleven o'clock. Before settling to his desk, he went in to Valentine.

They shook hands. In times of bereavement we are apt to observe more ceremony than at others. Tom sat down: which caused the new master to look towards him inquiringly.

"Valentine, I want to have a bit of talk with you. Upon what footing am I to be on here?"

"How do you mean?" asked Valentine: who was leaning back in the green leather chair with the air of his new importance full upon him, his elbows on the low arms, and an ivory paper-knife held between his fingers.

"My Uncle Jacob told me that from henceforth I was to assume my right place here, Valentine. I suppose it will be so."

"What do you call your right place?" cried Valentine.

"Well, my right place would be head of the office," replied Tom, speaking, as he always did, cordially and pleasantly. "But I don't wish to be exacting. Make me your partner, Valentine, and give me the second place in the firm."

"Can't do it, old fellow," said Valentine, in a tone which seemed to say he would like to joke the matter off. "The practice was my father's, and it is now mine."

"But you know that part of it ought to have been mine from the

first, Valentine. That is, from the time I have been of an age to succeed to it."

"I don't know it, I'm sure, Tom. If it 'ought' to have been yours, I suppose my father would have given it to you. He was able to judge."

Tom dropped his voice. "He sent for me that last day of his life, you know, Valentine. It was to tell me he had not done the right thing by me, but that it should be done now: that he had charged *you* to do it."

"Ah," said Valentine, carelessly, "worn-out old men take up odd fancies—fit for a lunatic asylum. My poor father must have been spent with disease, though not with age: but we did not know it."

"Will you make me your partner?"

"No, Tom, I can't. The practice was all my father's, and the practice must be mine. Look here: on that same day you speak of he sent for John Paul to add a codicil to his will. Now it stands to reason that if he had wished me to take you into the firm, he would have mentioned it in that codicil and bound me down to do it."

"And he did not?"

"Not a word of it. You are quite welcome to read the will. It is a very short and simple one: leaving what property he had to my mother, and the business and office furniture to me. The codicil Paul wrote was to decree that I should pay my mother a certain sum out of the profits. Your name is not mentioned in the will at all, from beginning to end."

Tom made no reply. Valentine continued.

"The object of his tying me down to pay over to my mother a portion of the profits is, because she has not enough to live on without it. There need be no secret about it. I am to give her a third of the income I make, whatsoever it may be."

"One final word, Valentine: will you be just and take me in?"

"No, Tom, I cannot.—And there's another thing. I don't wish to be mean, I'm sure; it's not in my nature: but with all my own expenses upon me and this third that I must hand over to my people, I fear I shall not be able to continue to give your mother the hundred and fifty a year that my father has allowed her so long."

"You cannot help yourself, Valentine. That much is provided for in the original partnership deed, and you are bound by it."

"No," dissented Valentine, flicking a speck off the front of his black coat. "My father might have been bound by it, but I am not. Now that the two original partners are dead, the deed is cancelled, don't you see. It is not binding upon me."

"I think you are mistaken: but I will leave that question for this morning. Is your decision, not to give me a share, final?"

"It is."

"Let me make one remark. You say the codicil stipulates that you shall pay a third of the profits to your mother—and it is a very just and right thing to do. Valentine, rely upon it, that your father's last intentions were that, of the other two-thirds left, one of them should be mine."

Valentine flushed red. He had a florid complexion at all times, something like salmon colour. Very different from Tom's, which was clear and healthy.

"We won't talk any more about it, Tom. How you can get such crotchets into your head, I can't imagine. If you sit there till mid-day, I can say no more than I have said: I cannot take you into partnership."

"Then I shall leave you," said Tom, rising. He was a fine-looking young fellow, standing there with his arm on the back of the client's chair, in which he had sat; tall and straight. His good, honest face had a shade of pain in it, as it gazed straight out to Valentine's. He looked his full six-and-twenty years.

"Well, I wish you would leave me, Tom," replied Valentine, carelessly. "I have heaps to do this morning."

"Leave the office, I mean. Leave you for good."

"Nonsense!"

"Though your father did not give me the rights that were my just due, I remained on, expecting and hoping that he would give them sometime. It was my duty to remain with him; at least, my mother told me so; and perhaps my interest. But the case is changed now. I will not stay with you, Valentine, unless you do me justice; I shall leave you now. Now, this hour."

"But you can't Tom. You would put me to frightful inconvenience."

"And what inconvenience—inconvenience for life—are you putting me to, Valentine? You take my prospects from me. The position that ought to be mine, here at Islip, you refuse to let me hold. This was my father's practice; a portion of it, at least, ought to be mine. I will not continue to be a servant where I ought to be a master."

"Then you must go," said Valentine.

Tom held out his hand. "Good-bye. I do not part in enmity."

"Good-bye, Tom. I'm sorry: but it's your fault."

Tom Chandler went into the office where he had used to sit, opened his desk, and began putting up what things belonged to him. They made a tolerable-sized parcel. Valentine, left in his chair of state, sat on in a brown study. All the inconvenience that Tom's leaving him would be productive of was flashing into his mind. Tom had been, under old Jacob, the prop and stay of the business; knew about everything, and had a clear head for details. He himself was different—and Valentine was never more sure of the fact than at this moment. There are lawyers and lawyers. Tom was one, Valentine was another.

He, Valentine, had never much cared for business; he liked pleasure a great deal better. Indulged always by both father and mother, he had grown up self-indulgent. It was all very fine to perch himself in that chair and play the master; but he knew that, without Tom to direct things, for some time to come he should be three-parts lost. But, as to making him a partner and giving him a share?—"No," concluded Valentine emphatically, "I won't do it."

Tom, carrying his paper parcel, left the house and crossed the road to the post-office, which was higher up the street, to post a letter he had hastily written. It was addressed to a lawyer at Worcester. A week or two before, Tom, being at Worcester, was asked by this gentleman if he would take the place of head clerk and manager in his office. The question was put jokingly, for the lawyer supposed Tom to be a fixture at Islip: but Tom saw that he would have been glad for him to take the berth. He hoped it might still be vacant. What with one thing and another, beginning with the injustice done him at the old place and his anxiety to get into another without delay, Tom felt more bothered than he had ever felt in his life. The tempting notion of setting-up somewhere for himself came into his mind. But it went out of it again: he could not afford to risk any waste of time, with his mother's home to keep up, and especially with this intimated threat of Valentine's to stop her hundred and fifty pounds a year income.

"How do you do, Mr. Chandler?"

At the sound of the pretty voice, Tom turned short round from the post-office window, which was a stationer's, to see a charming girl all ribbons and muslins, with shy blue eyes and bright hair. Tom took the hand only half held out to him.

"I beg your pardon, Emma: I was reading this concert bill. The idea of Islip's getting up a concert!"

She was the only child of John Paul the lawyer, and had as fair a face as you'd wish to see, and a habit of blushing at nothing. To watch her as she stood there, the roses coming and going, and the dimples deepening, and the small white teeth peeping, did Tom good. He was reddening himself, for that matter.

"Yes, it is to be given in the large club-room at the Bell to-night," she answered. "Shall you come over for it?"

"Are you going to it, Emma?"

"Oh yes. Papa has taken twelve tickets. A great many people are coming in to go with us."

"I shall go also," said Tom decidedly. And at that the roses came again.

"What a large parcel you are carrying!"

Tom held the brown paper parcel further out at the remark.

"They are my goods and chattels," said he. "Things that I had at the office. I have left it, Emma."

"Left the office!" she repeated, looking as though she did not understand. "You don't mean *really* left it?—left it for good?"

"I have left it for good, Emma. Valentine ——"

"Here's papa," interrupted Emma, as a stout, elderly gentleman with iron-grey hair turned out of the stationer's; neither of them having the least idea he was there.

"Is it you, Tom Chandler?" cried Mr. Paul.

"Yes, it is, sir."

"And fine to be you, I should say! Spending your time in gossip at the busiest part of the day."

"Unfortunately I have to-day no business to do," returned Tom, smiling in the old lawyer's face. "And I was just telling Miss Paul why. I have left the office, sir, and am looking out for another situation."

Mr. Paul stared at him. "Why, it is your own office. What's that for?"

"It ought to be my own office in part, as it was my father's before me. But Valentine cannot see that, sir. He tells me he will not take me into partnership; that I ought not to expect it. I refuse to remain on any other terms; and so I have left him for good. These are my rattletraps. Odds and ends of things that I am bringing away."

Mr. Paul continued to look at Tom in silence for a minute or two. Tom thought he was considering what he should next say. It was not that, however. "How well he would suit me! How I should like to take him! What a load of work he'd lift off my shoulders!" Those were the thoughts that were running rapidly through Mr. Paul's mind.

But he did not speak them. In fact, he had no intention of speaking them, or of taking on Tom, much as he would have liked to do it.

"When Jacob Chandler lay dying but yesterday, as it were, he told me you would join his son; that the two of you would carry on the practice together."

"Yes, he said the same thing to me," replied Tom. "But Valentine refuses to carry it out. So I told him I would not be a servant where I ought to be a master, and came away."

"And what are you going to do, young man?"

Tom smiled. He was just as much a lawyer as Mr. Paul was. "I should like to set up in practice for myself," he answered; "but I do not yet see my way sufficiently clear to do so. There may be a chance for me at Worcester, as managing clerk. I have written to ask if the place is filled up. May I join your party to the concert to-night, sir?" he asked.

"I don't mind—if you are going to it," said the old lawyer: "but I can't see what young men want at concerts?"

Tom caught Miss Emma's eye and her blushes, and gave her a glance that told he should be sure to come.

But, before the lapse of twenty-four hours, in spite of his non-inten-

tion, Mr. Paul had taken on Tom Chandler: and, looking back in later years, it might be seen that it had been on the cards of destiny that Tom should be taken.

> "There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them as we will."

Lawyer Paul was still in his dining-room that evening in his handsome house just out of Islip, and before any of his expected guests had come, when Tom arrived to say he could not make one, and was shown into the drawing-room. Feasting his eyes with Miss Emma's charming dress, and shaking her hand longer than was at all polite, Tom told her why he could not go.

"My mother took me to task severely, Emma. She asked me what I could be thinking of to wish to go to a public concert when my uncle was only buried the day before yesterday. The truth is, I never thought of that."

"I am so sorry," whispered Emma. "But I am worse than you are. It was I who first asked whether you meant to go. And it is to be the nicest concert!"

"I don't care for the concert," avowed Tom. "I—I should like to have gone to it, though."

"At least you—you will stay and take some tea," suggested Emma.

"If I may."

"Would you please to loose my hand?" went on Emma. "The lace has caught in your sleeve button."

"I'll undo it," said Tom. "What pretty lace it is! Is it Valenciennes? My mother thinks there's no lace like Valenciennes."

"It is only pillow," replied Emma, bending her face over the lace and the buttons. "After you left this morning, papa said he wished he had remembered to ask you where he could get a prospectus of those water-works. He——"

"Mrs. and Miss Maceveril," interrupted a servant, opening the door to show in some ladies.

So the interview was over; and Tom took the opportunity to go to the lawyer's dining-room, and tell him about the water-works.

"You have come over from Crabb to go to this fine concert!" cried Mr. Paul, sipping his port wine; which he always took out of a claret-glass. Though never more than one glass, he would be half an hour over it.

"I have come to say I can't go to it," replied Tom. "My mother thinks it would not be seemly so soon after Uncle Jacob's death."

"Quite right of her, too. Why don't you sit down? No wine? Well, sit down all the same. I want to talk to you. Will you come into my office?"

The proposal was so sudden, so unexpected, that Tom scarcely

knew what to make of it. He did not know that Mr. Paul's office wanted him.

"I have been thinking upon matters since I saw you this morning, Tom Chandler. I am growing elderly; some people would say old; and the thought has often crossed me that it might be as well if I had somebody about me different from an ordinary clerk. Were I laid aside by illness to-morrow the conduct of the business would still lie upon me; and lie it must, unless I get a confidential manager, who is a qualified lawyer: one who can act in my place without reference to me. I offer you the post; and I will give you, to begin with, two hundred a year."

"I should like it of all things," cried Tom in delight, his eyes and face sparkling. "I am used to Islip and don't care to leave it. Yes, sir, I will come with the greatest pleasure."

"Then that's settled," said old Paul.

II.

JUST about two years had gone on, and it was hot summer again. In the same room at North Villa where poor Thomas Chandler had died, sat Valentine Chandler and his mother. It was evening, and the window was open to the garden. In another room, its window also open, sat the three girls, Georgiana, Clementina, and Julietta; all of them singing and playing and squalling.

"Not talk about business on a Sunday night!—You must have grown wonderfully serious all on a sudden!" exclaimed Mrs. Chandler, tartly. "I never get to see you except on a Sunday: you know that, Valentine."

"It is not often I can get time to come over on a week-day," responded Valentine, helping himself to some spirits and water, which had been placed on the table after supper. "Business won't let me."

"If all I hear be true, it is not business that hinders you," said Mrs. Chandler. "Be quiet, Valentine: I *must* speak. I have put it off and off, disliking to do it; but I must speak at last. Your business, as I am told, is falling off alarmingly; that a great deal of it has gone over to John Paul."

"Who told you?"

"That is beyond the question, Valentine, and I am not going to make mischief. Is it true, or is it not?"

"A little of the practice went over to Paul when Tom left me. It was not much. Some of the clients, you see, had been accustomed to Tom at our place, and they followed him. That was a crafty move of John Paul's—the getting hold of Tom."

"I am not alluding to the odds and ends of practice that left you

then, Valentine. I speak chiefly of this last year. Hardly a week has passed in it but some client or other has left you for Paul."

"If they have, I can't help it," was the careless reply. "How those girls squall!"

"I suppose there is no underhand influence at work, Valentine?" she said dubiously. "Tom Chandler does not hold out baits for your clients, and so fish them away from you?"

"Well, no, I suppose not," repeated the young lawyer, draining his glass. "I accused Tom of it one day, and for once in his life he flew into a passion, asking me what I had ever seen in him to suspect he could be guilty of such a thing."

"No. I fear it is as I have been given to understand, Valentine: that the cause lies with you. You spend your time in pleasure instead of being at business. When clients go to the office, three times out of every five they do not find you. You are not there. You are over at the Bell, playing at billiards, or drinking in the bar."

"What an unfounded calumny!" exclaimed Valentine.

"I have been told," continued Mrs. Chandler, sinking her voice, "that you are getting to drink frightfully. It is nothing for clients now to find you in a state incapable of attending to them."

"Now, mother, I insist upon knowing who told you these lies," spluttered Valentine, getting up and striding to the window. "Let anybody come forward and prove that he has found me incapable—if he can."

"I heard that Sir John Whitney went in the other day and could make neither top nor tail of what you said," continued his mother, disregarding his denial. "You are agent for the little bit of property he owns here: he chanced to come over from Whitney Hall, and found you like that."

"I'll write to Sir John Whitney and ask what he means by saying it."

"He did not say it—that I know of. Others were witnesses of your state as well as he."

"If my clerks tell tales out of my office, I'll discharge them from it," burst forth Valentine, too angry to notice the tacit admission his words gave. "Not the clerks, you say? Then why don't you——"

"Do be still, Valentine. Putting yourself out like this will do no good. I hope it is not true: if you assure me it is not, I am ready to believe you. All I spoke for was, to caution you, and to tell you what is being said, that you may be on your guard. Leave off going to the Bell; stick to business instead: people will soon cease talking then."

"I daresay they will!" growled Valentine.

"If you are always at your post, ready to confer with clients, they would have no plea for leaving you and going to Paul. For all our sakes, Valentine, you must do this."

"And so I do. If——"

"Hush! The girls are coming in. I hear them shutting the piano."

Valentine dashed out a second supply, and drank it, not caring whether it contained most brandy or water. We are never so angry as when conscience accuses us: and it was accusing him.

In came the young ladies, laughing, romping, and pushing one another; Georgiana, Clementina, and Julietta, arrayed in all the colours of the rainbow. The chief difference Sunday made to them was, that their smartest clothes came out.

Mrs. Chandler's accusations were right, and Valentine's denials wrong. During the past two years he had been drifting downwards. The Bell was getting to possess so great a fascination for him that he could not keep away from it more than a couple of hours together. It was nothing for him to be seen playing billiards in the morning, or lounging in the parlour or the bar-room, drinking. One of his clerks would come interrupting him with news that some client was waiting at the office, and Valentine would put down his cue or his glass, and go flying over. But clients, as a rule, don't like this kind of reception: they expect to find their legal advisers cool and ready on the spot.

The worst of all was the drink. Valentine had made a friend of it so long now, that he did not attempt to do without it. Thought he could not. Where he at first drank one glass he went on to drink two glasses, and the two gave place to three, or to more. Of course it told upon him. It told now and then upon his manner in the day-time: which was unfortunate. He could leave his billiards behind him and his glass, but he could not leave the effects of what the glass had contained; and it was no uncommon thing now for his clients, when he did go rushing in to them, to find his speech uncertain and his brains in a muddle. As a natural result, the practice was passing over to John Paul as fast as it could pass: and Tom, who was chief manager at Paul's now, had been obliged to take on an extra clerk. Every day of his life old Paul told himself how lucky his move of engaging Tom had turned out. And this, not for the extra business he had gained: a great deal of that might have come to him whether Tom was with him or not: but because Tom had eased his shoulders of their hard work and care, and because he, the old man, had grown to like him so much.

But never a word had Mr. Paul said about raising Tom's salary. Tom supposed he did not intend to raise it. And, much as he liked his post, and, for many reasons, his stay at Islip, he entertained notions of quitting both. Valentine had stopped the income his father had paid to Mrs. Chandler; and Tom's two hundred a year, combined with the trifle remaining to her out of her private income, did but just suffice to keep the home going.

It chanced that on the very same Sunday evening, when they were talking at North Villa of Valentine's doings, Tom broached the subject to his mother. They were sitting out of doors in the warm summer twilight, sniffing the haycocks in the neighbouring field. Tom spoke abruptly.

"Should you mind my going to London, mother?"

"To London!" cried Mrs. Chandler. "What for?"

"To live."

"You—you are not leaving Mr. Paul, are you?"

"I am thinking of it. You see, mother mine, there is no prospect of advancement where I am. It seems to me that I may jog on for ever at two hundred a year ——"

"It is enough for us, Tom."

"As things are, yes: but nothing more. If—for instance—if I wanted to set up a home of my own, I have no means of doing it, Never shall have, at the present rate."

Mrs. Chandler turned and looked at Tom's face. "Are you thinking of marrying, Tom?"

"No. It is of no use to think of it. If I thought of it ever so, I could not do it. Putting that idea aside, it occurs to me sometimes to remember that I am eight-and-twenty, and ought to be doing better for myself."

"Do you fancy you could do better in London?"

"I am sure I could. Very much better."

Opening the Bible on her lap, Mrs. Chandler took out the spectacles that lay between the leaves, and put them into their case with trembling fingers.

"Do whatever you think best, Tom," she said at length, having waited to steady her voice. "Children leave their parents' home for one of their own; this Book tells us that they should do so. Had Jacob Chandler done the right thing by you, you would never have needed to leave Islip: had his son done the right thing by me, I should not be the burden to you that I am. But now that George has taken to send me money over from Canada ——"

"Burden!" interrupted Tom, laughingly. "Don't you talk treason, Mrs. Chandler. If I do go to London, you will have to come with me, and see the lions."

That night, lying awake, Tom made his mind up. He had been offered a good appointment in London to manage a branch office for a large legal firm—four hundred a year salary. And he would never for a moment have hesitated to take it, but for not liking to leave old Paul and (especially) old Paul's daughter.

Walking to Islip the next morning, he thought a bit about the best way of breaking it to Mr. Paul—who would be sure to come down upon him with a storm. By mid-day he had found no opportunity of

speaking: people were perpetually coming in: and in the afternoon Tom had to go a mile or two into the country. In returning he overtook Emma. She was walking along the field path under the hedge, her hat hanging on her arm by its strings.

"It is so warm," said she, in apology, as Tom shook hands. "And the trees make it shady here. I went over to ask Mary Maceveril to come back with me and dine: but they are gone to Worcester for the day."

"So much the better for me," said Tom. "I want to tell you, Emma, that I am going to leave."

"To leave!"

"I have had a very good place offered me in London. Mr. Paul knows nothing about it yet, for I did not make up my mind till last night, and I could not get a minute alone with him this morning."

She had turned her face suddenly to the hedge, seemingly to pick a wild rose. Tom saw that the pink roses on her cheek had turned to white ones.

"I shall be very sorry to leave Islip, Emma. But what else can I do? Situated as I am now, I cannot even glance at any plans for the future. By making this change, I may be able to do so. My salary will be a good one and enable me to put by: and the firm I am going to dropped me a hint of a possible partnership."

"I wish these dog-roses had no thorns! And I wish they would grow double, as the garden roses do!"

"So that I—having considered the matter thoroughly—believe I shall do well to make the change. Perhaps then I may begin to indulge dreams of a future."

"There! all the petals are off!"

"Let me gather them for you.—What is the matter, Emma?"

"Matter? Nothing, sir. What should there be?"

"Here is a beauty. Will you take it?"

"Thank you. I never thought you would leave papa, Mr. Chandler."

"But—don't you perceive my reasons, Emma? What prospect is there for me as long as I remain here? What hope can I indulge, or even glance at, of—of settling in life?"

"I daresay you don't want to settle."

"I do not put the question to myself, because it is so useless."

"I shall be late for dinner. Good-bye."

She took a sudden flight to the little white side-gate of her house, which opened to the field, ran across the garden, and disappeared within doors. Tom, catching a glimpse of her face, saw that it was wet with tears.

"Yes, it's very hard upon her and upon me," he said to himself. "And all the more so that I cannot in honour speak, even just to let her know that I care for her."

Continuing his way towards the office, he met Mr. Paul, who was just leaving it. Tom turned with him, having to report to him of the business he had been to execute.

"I expected you home before this, Chandler."

"Willis was out when I got there, and I had to wait for him. His wife gave me some syllabub."

"Now for goodness' sake don't mix up syllabubs with law!" cried the old gentleman, testily. "That's just you, Tom Chandler. Will Willis do as I advise him, or will he not?"

"Yes, he is willing; but upon conditions. I will explain to-morrow morning," added Tom, as Mr. Paul laid his hand upon the handle of his front gate, to enter.

"You can come in and explain now: and take some dinner with me."

Emma did not know he was there until she came into the dining-room. It gave her a kind of pleasant shock. They were deep in conversation about Willis, and she sat down quietly.

"I am glad he has asked me," thought Tom. "It will give me an opportunity of telling him about myself after dinner."

Accordingly, when the port wine was on the table and Emma had gone, for she never stayed after the cloth was removed, Tom spoke. Old Paul was pouring out his one large glass. The communication was over in a few words, for Tom did not feel it a comfortable one to make.

"Oh!" said old Paul, after listening. "Want to better yourself, do you? Going to London to get four hundred a year, with a faint prospect of a partnership? Have had it in your mind some time to make a change? No prospects here at Islip? Can but just keep your mother? Perhaps you want to keep a wife as well, Tom Chandler?"

Tom flushed like a school-girl. As the old gentleman saw, peering at him from under his bushy grey eyebrows.

"I should very much like to be able to do it, sir," boldly replied Tom, playing with his wine-glass. "But I can't. I can't as much as think of it under present circumstances."

"Who is the young lady? Your cousin Julietta?"

Tom burst into laughter. "No, that it is not, sir."

"Perhaps it is Miss Maceveril? Well, the Maceverils are exclusive people. But faint heart, you know, never won fair lady."

Tom shook his head. "I should not be afraid of winning *her*." But it was not Miss Maceveril he was thinking of.

"What should you be afraid of?"

"Her friends. They would not listen to me."

"Thinking you are not rich, I suppose?"

"Knowing I am not, sir."

"The young lady may have money."

"There's the evil of it," said Tom, impulsively. "If she had none,

it would be all straight and smooth for us. I would very soon make a little home for her in London."

"It is the first time I ever heard of money being an impediment to matrimony," observed old Paul, taking the first sip at his wine.

"Not when the money is on the wrong side, sir."

"Has she much?"

"I don't know in the least. She will be sure to have some: she is an only child."

"Then it *is* Mary Maceveril!" nodded the old man. "You look after her, Tom, my boy. She will have ten thousand pounds."

"Miss Maceveril would not look at me, if I wanted her ever so. She is as proud as a peacock."

"Tut, tut! Try. Try, boy. Why, what could she want? As my partner, you might be a match for even Miss Maceveril."

"Your what, sir?" cried Tom, in surprise, lifting his eyes from the blue-and-red checked table-cover.

"I said my partner, Tom. Yes, that is what I intend to make you: have intended it for some time. We will have no fly-away London jaunts and junkets. Once my partner, of course the world will understand that you will be also my successor: and I think I shall soon retire."

Tom had risen from his seat: for once in his life he was agitated. Mr. Paul rose and put his hand on Tom's shoulder.

"With this position, and a suitable income to back it, Tom, you are a match for Mary Maceveril, or for any other good girl. Go and try her, boy; try your luck."

"But—it is of no use," spoke Tom. "You don't understand, sir."

"No use! Go and try,"—pushing him towards the door. "My wife was one of the proud Wintertons, you know: how should I have gained her but for trying? *I* did not depreciate myself, and say I'm not good enough for her: I went and asked her to have me."

"But suppose it is not Mary Maceveril, sir?—as indeed it is not. Suppose it is somebody nearer—nearer home?"

"No matter. Go and try, I say."

"I—do—think—you—understand—me, sir!" cried Tom, slowly and dubiously. "I—hope there is no mistake!"

"Rubbish about mistake!" cried old Paul, pushing him towards the door. "Go and do as I bid you. Try."

He went to look for Emma, and saw her sitting under the acacia tree on the bench, which faced the other way. Stepping noiselessly over the grass, he put his arms on her shoulders, and she turned round with a cry. But Tom would not let her go.

"I am told to come out and *try*, Emma. I want a wife, and your papa thinks I may gain one. He is going to make me his partner;

and he says he thinks I am a match for any good girl. And I am not going to London."

She turned pale and red, red and pale, and then burst into a fit of tears and trembling.

"Oh, Tom, can it be true! Oh, Tom, Tom!"

And Tom kissed her for the first time in his life. But not for the last.

The news came out to us in a lump. Tom Chandler was taken into partnership and was to marry Emma. We wished them good luck. She was not to leave her home, for her father would not spare her: she and Tom were to live with him.

"I had to do it, you know, Squire," said old Paul, meeting the Squire one day. "Only children are apt to be wilful. Not that I ever found Emma so. Had I not allowed it, I expect she'd have dutifully saddled herself, an old maid, upon me for life."

"She could not have chosen better," cried the Squire, warmly. "It there's one young fellow I respect above another, it's Tom Chandler, He is good to the back-bone."

"He'd not have got her if he were not; you may rely upon that," concluded old Paul, emphatically.

So the wedding took place at Islip in the autumn, and old Paul gave Tom a month's holiday, and told him he had better take Emma to Paris; as they both seemed, by what he could gather, red-hot to see it.

III.

Drizzle, drizzle, drizzle, came down the rain, dropping with monotonous patter on the decaying leaves that strewed the garden. Not the trim well-kept garden it used to be, but showing signs of neglect. What with the long grass, and the lying leaves, and the sloppy roads, and the November skies, nothing could well look more dreary than the world looked to-day, as seen from the windows of North Villa.

Time had gone on, another year, bringing its events and its changes; as time always does bring. The chief change, as connected with this little record, lay in Valentine Chandler. He had gone to the dogs. That was Islip's expression for it, not mine. A baby had come to Tom and Emma.

Little by little, step by step, Valentine had gone down lower and lower. Some people, who are given to bad habits, make spasmodic efforts to reform; but, so far as Islip could see, Valentine never made any. He passed more time at the Bell, or at less respectable public-houses, and drank deeper: and at last neglected his business nearly entirely. Enervated and good for nothing, he would lie in bed till twelve o'clock in the day. To keep on the office seemed only a farce.

Its profits were not enough to pay for its one solitary clerk. Valentine was then pulled up by an illness, which confined him to his bed, and left him in a shaky state. The practice had quite gone then, and the clerk had gone; and Valentine knew that, even though he had had sufficient energy left to try to bring them back, no clients would have returned to him.

He was going to emigrate to Canada. His friends hoped he would be steady there, and redeem the past: he gave fair promises of it. George Chandler (Tom's brother, who was doing very well there now, with a large farm about him, and a wife and children) had undertaken to receive Valentine and help him to employment. So he would have to begin life over again.

It was all so much gall and bitterness to his mother and sisters, and had been for a long while. The tears were dropping through the fingers of Mrs. Chandler now, as she leaned on her hand and watched the dreary rain on the window-panes. With all his faults, she had so loved Valentine. She loved him still, above all the trouble he had brought; and it seemed, this afternoon, just as though her heart would break.

When the business fell off, of course her income fell off also. Valentine was to have paid her a third of the profits, but if he did not make any profits, he could not pay her any. She had the private income, two hundred a year, which Jacob had secured to her: but what was that for a family accustomed to live in the fashion? There is an old saying that necessity has no law: and Mrs. Jacob Chandler and her daughters had proved its truth. One of the girls had gone out as a governess; one was on a prolonged visit to her Aunt Cramp; and Julietta and her mother were to move into a smaller house at Christmas. The practice and the other business, once Valentine's, and his father's before him, had all gone over to the other firm, Paul and Chandler.

"I'm sure I don't know what Georgiana means by writing home for money amidst all our troubles!" cried Mrs. Chandler, fretfully, "She has fifteen pounds a year salary, and she must make that do."

"She says her last quarter's money is all spent, and she can't possibly manage without a new mantle for Sunday," returned Julietta.

"*I* can't supply it; you know I can't. I am not able to pay my own way now. Let her write to Mrs. Cramp."

"It would be of no use, mamma. Aunt Mary Ann will never help us to clothes. She says we have had too many of them."

"Well, I don't want to be worried with these matters: it's enough for me to think of poor Valentine's things. Only two days now before he starts. And what wretched weather it is!"

"Valentine says he shall not take much luggage with him. He saw me counting his shirts, and he said they were too many by half."

"And who will supply him with shirts out there, do you suppose?"

demanded Mrs. Chandler. "You talk nothing but nonsense, Julietta. Where *is* Valentine? He ought to be here, with all this packing to do. He must have been gone out these two hours."

"He said he had business at Islip."

Mrs. Chandler looked gloomy at the answer. She hated the very name of Islip: partly because they held no longer any part in the place, partly because the Bell was in it.

But Valentine had not gone to the Bell this time. His visit was to his cousin Tom; and his errand was to beg of Tom to give or lend him a fifty-pound note before sailing.

"I shall have next to nothing in my pocket, Tom, when I land," he urged, as the two sat together in Tom's private room. "If I get on over there, I will pay you back. If I don't—well, perhaps you won't grudge having helped me for the last time."

For a moment Tom did not answer. He sat before his desk-table, Valentine near him: just as Valentine had one day sat at his desk in his private room, and Tom had been the petitioner, not so many years gone by. Valentine looked upon the silence as an ill-omen.

"You have all the business that once was mine in your fingers now, Tom. It has left me for you."

"But not by any wish or seeking of mine, Valentine; you know that," spoke Tom readily, turning his honest eyes and kindly face on the fallen man. "I wish you were in your office still. There's plenty of work for both of us."

"Well, I am not in it; and you have got it all. You might lend me such a poor little sum as fifty pounds."

"Of course I mean to lend it: but I was thinking. Look here, Valentine. I will not give it you now; you cannot want it before sailing: and you might lose it on board," he added laughing. "You shall carry with you an order upon my brother George for one hundred pounds."

"Will George pay it?"

"I will take care of that. He shall get a letter from me by the same mail that takes you out. Stay, Valentine: I will give you the order now."

He wrote what was necessary, sealed it up, and handed it over. Valentine thanked him.

"How is Emma?" he asked as he rose. "And the boy?"

"Quite well, thank you: both. Will you not go in and see them?"

"I think not. You can say good-bye for me. I don't much care to trouble people."

"God bless you, Valentine," said Tom, clasping his hand. "You will begin life anew over there, and may have a happy one yet. One of these days you will be coming back to us, a prosperous man."

Valentine went trudging home through the rain, miserable and

dispirited, and found a visitor had arrived—Mrs. Cramp. His mother and sister were upstairs then, busy over his trunks; so Mrs. Cramp had him all to herself. She had liked Valentine very much. When he went wrong, it put her out frightfully, and since then she had not spared him: which of course put out Valentine.

"Yes, it will be a change," he acknowledged, in reply to a remark of hers. "A flourishing solicitor here, and a servant there. For that's what I shall be over yonder, I conclude; I can't expect to be my own master. You don't know how good the business was, Aunt Mary Ann, at the time my father died. If I could but have kept it!"

"You could not expect to keep it," said Mrs. Cramp, who sat facing him, her bonnet tilted back from her red and comely face, her purple stuff gown pulled up above her boots.

"I should have kept it, but for now and then taking a little drop too much," confessed poor Valentine: who was deeper in the dumps that day than he had ever been before.

"I don't know that," said Mrs. Cramp. "The business was a usurped one."

"A what?" said Valentine.

"There is an over-ruling Power above us, you know," she went on. "I am quite sure, Valentine—I have learnt it by experience—that injustice never answers in the long run. It may seem to succeed for a time; but it does not last: it cannot and it does not. If a man rears himself on another's downfall, causing himself that downfall that he may rise, his prosperity rests on no sure foundation. In some way or another the past comes home to him; and he suffers for it, if not in his own person, in that of his children. Ill-gotten riches bring a curse, never a blessing."

"What a growler you are, Aunt Mary Ann!"

"I don't mean it for growling, Valentine. It is true."

"It's not true."

"Not true! The longer I live the more examples I see of it. A man treads another down that he may rise himself: and there he stands high and flourishing. But wait a few years, and look then. He is gone. Gone, and no trace of his prosperity left. And when I mark that, I recall that verse in the Psalms of David: 'I went by, and lo, he was gone: I sought him, but his place was nowhere to be found.' That verse is a true type of real life, Valentine."

"I don't believe it," cried Valentine. "And where's the good of having the Psalms at your finger-ends?"

"You do believe it. Why, Valentine, take your own case. Was there ever a closer exemplification? Tom was injured; put down; I may say, crushed by you and your father. Yes, crushed: crushed out of his rights. *His* father made the business; and the half of it, at any rate, ought to have been Tom's. Instead of that, your father deposed

him and usurped it. He repented when he was dying, and charged you to remedy the wrong. But you did not; *you* usurped it. And what has it ended in?"

"Ended in?" cried Valentine vacantly.

"You are—as you are; ruined in character, in pocket, in reputation; and Tom is respected and flourishing. The business has left you and gone to him; not through any seeking of his, but through your own doings entirely; the very self-same business that his father made has in the natural course of time and events gone back to him—and he is not thirty yet. It is retribution, nephew. Justice has been righting herself; and man could neither stay nor hinder it."

"What nonsense!" debated Valentine testily. "Suppose I had been steady: would the business have left me for Tom then?"

"Yes. In some inscrutable way, that we see not, it would. I am sure of it. You would no more have been allowed to triumph to the end on your ill-gotten gains, than I could stand if I went out and perched myself on yonder weathercock," affirmed Mrs. Cramp, growing warm. "Your father kept his place, it is true; but what a miserable man he always was, and without any ostensible cause."

"I wonder you don't set up for a parson, Aunt Mary Ann! This is as good as a sermon."

"Then carry the sermon in your memory through life, Valentine. Our doings, whether they be good or ill, bring back their fruits. In some wonderful manner that we cannot understand, events are always shaping onwards their own true ends, their appointed destiny, and working out the will of Heaven."

That's all. And the Squire seemed to take a leaf out of Mrs. Cramp's book. For ever so long afterwards, he would tell us to read a lesson from the history of the Chandlers, and to remember that none can deal unjustly in the sight of God without having to account for it sooner or later.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

OLD HUNDRED.

By Anne Beale.

FOLLOWING the windings of a certain Welsh primrose lane, we at length reach a pretty cottage in its midst. Yes, it is a pretty cottage, although the walls of its one story are of mud, the windows small, the thatch weather-stained—for it is covered with creepers that, a few months' hence, will be a mass of blossom. As it is placed upon the bank, we ascend a few rough steps to the wicket-gate, and leaving the primrose-bank beneath us, enter the trim garden. A quickset hedge of hawthorn, gooseberry-bushes, privet, roses, and periwinkles effectually shuts out the lane. We glance over it, and see the loveliest of landscapes beneath us. Broad meadows, dotted with sheep and black cattle, spread their ample skirts on either side a winding river, upon which fall the sun's rays, making its smooth surface appear like a twisting snake with burnished skin. Masses of wood, just donning their green clothing, rise one above another in the levels, and in the distance a range of blue mountains forbids the gaze to penetrate beyond. A warm, soft haze hangs over the landscape, and gives a lagging, doubtful joy to these first spring days, when the languid mind and weary limbs need excitement to rouse them into the exhilaration that a few weeks of such bright weather will naturally bring.

But there is nothing exciting in this quiet cottage. No sound of woman's laughter or childhood's mirth bids you be cheerful and awakes you to a consciousness of busy life. All is perfect repose, and perfect neatness. We tap at the usually open door, and peep in at the windows, but receive no answering "Who is there?" The dwelling is untenanted, but not so the garden. The songs of a hundred birds gladden your heart as you stand to listen. Tread lightly, and you may, perhaps, find some one at home in that tiny dwelling in the hawthorn hedge. A bright redbreast on the spray above proclaims the inmate a bullfinch; and whilst we peep into his little house, and see his mate seated on her eggs, we cause him a flutter and cry of distress that we do not willingly listen to. We are glad to hear the short, full whistle again, as we leave the neighbourhood of the nest and walk round the garden. The flower-beds have already many of the blossoms of spring in them. Here are patches of various-hued polyanthus, early hyacinths, with their faint, sickly perfume, and languishing bells, rich and golden double cowslips, one or two lingering crocuses, and a well-tended plant of single anemone. Here, again, is a wide-spreading root of Russian

violet, and one or two of white violet, scenting the air with an unusual perfume; for the sweet violet, alas! does not grow wild in these parts. At the back, up the slope, is a garden of primroses. The glorious daffodil, too, so favoured by the poets, hangs its large golden head hard by.

In a sunshiny spot near the primroses, we come upon a little sheet of white. This portion of the garden is tended with great care. Not a weed hinders the growth of the precious strawberry plant, or intercepts the progress of the pure white flower. Not far off is a bed of fragrant and useful herbs—thyme, mint, and sage in abundance; while in their midst is a bush of southernwood, called by the country-folks boy's love. Under the very eye of the sun, we have lavender and rosemary, as modest of flower as fragrant of leaf; and everywhere the shining leaves of the periwinkle give promise of that bright blue flower. Crowning this pretty garden at the back is a large wild cherry-tree, that flings its white garments on all sides, and looks protectingly on the lowly cot it overshadows. Beyond the neat hedge at the right is another sloping garden, prepared for potatoes and other vegetables, in which fruit-bushes and apple-trees also appear.

Not long ago, this cottage and garden belonged to a very old woman, who might usually be seen seated at its door. She is worth describing, as she was said to be a hundred-and-nine years old, and we believe she was so. Indeed, it would be a long and troublesome work to search the register for the certificates of birth of all the men and women buried in the mountainous districts of this country who had lived over a hundred years. This one, known as "Old Hundred," looked her age. She was lean, wrinkled, and purblind; and had none of the outward comeliness of old age. But she was always scrupulously clean, and neatly, if coarsely, dressed. She wore the woollen gown and checked apron of her class, had a yellow handkerchief pinned over her shoulders, and a blue one drawn tightly over her cap, two corners of which were fastened under her chin, while the others hung down her back. A white cap-border surrounded her wizened face, and a high, antiquated beaver hat completed the head-gear. There was the same air of quiet contentment about her that pervaded the cottage. She held a half-knitted woollen stocking in her hand, to which she added slowly, and with evident difficulty, stitch after stitch, never ceasing from her painful and monotonous labour. She had been accustomed thus to keep her hands employed all her life, when not engaged in field work; and when they were almost paralysed with rheumatism, she still "dragged on the lengthening chain."

Nearly a hundred years of toil in house, field, and garden seems almost mythical; nevertheless, Old Hundred had passed through them, as was well authenticated, not only by herself, but the dwellers around her. She had a wonderful memory and unimpaired hearing, and was

always well pleased to talk over the events of her life. She was the chronicle of village histories, and also remembered the births, majorities, and deaths of all the squires in the neighbourhood. Although no politician, she knew that she had seen out four kings, and lived far into the reign of our beloved Queen Victoria. She recalled so many elections and county members that she wearied herself and her listeners by recounting them; and as for superstitions, her mind was full of them.

She had lived all these years unmarried, although she was wont to say, as most single ladies do, that it was her own fault.

"I might have married dozens of times," she would affirm proudly, "but it didn't suit me. I liked to be independent, and work for myself. I have always been seeing that men are of no use in the world but to smoke and drink."

Still this strong-minded old lady began to feel lonely when lovers no longer sought her; and after she had waded through more than half a century in solitary state, she took to herself—not a helpmeet for her—but a stray parish infant. She would tell the story in this wise: "I was by when they were taking the poor orphan to the workhouse, and her cries went to my heart. She had nobody belonging to her, and I was very lone, so says I, 'Give you the baby to me, and I'll nurse her.' They gave her to me, and I grew so fond of her, as if I were her mother. The parish paid me so much a week for her till she was four years old, then that old relieving officer came, and said she must go to the workus school to have some learning. 'Learning,' says I, 'why she's a God Almighty's innocent.' And so she was. My Janny wasn't wise, but she was a sight better than many that think themselves so. I offered to keep her and bring her up, if they 'ould be paying me half a crown a week: but they 'ouldn't give me a farthing. They tried to take her away, but she screamed till I thought the old walls 'ould be falling, so says I, "Come you, Janny. Here's a pair of arms as 'll be working for you;' and, name o' goodness! she tumbled into 'em, and there she stopped. The parish got rid of her, and I had a blessing."

This Janny was a wonder to everyone. As Old Hundred said, she was not wise; that is to say, she could acquire no book lore, and was backward in most things: but she was so gentle and affectionate that, as she grew up, she became a sort of parish saint. She was devoted to her benefactress, helpful to her neighbours, and, in her unobtrusive way, a mute teacher to many. If Old Hundred scolded, she never complained; if food was scarce, she never murmured; and if she were weak and sick, she endured. She had a love of flowers so intense that she managed to rear them as no one else could, and the wretched hut in which she then lived was always fragrant with their scent. Every old teapot or cracked basin became a flower-pot, and the one half-glazed window and barren ground in front of it were filled with blossoms. She was a regular attendant at church, rarely failing to be

present at three services on Sundays, and one at least in the week. She was never tired of listening to preaching, or following funerals, and her constancy in such exercises had its effect on Old Hundred, who was not reckoned "a godly woman" by her acquaintances.

When Old Hundred was between seventy and eighty years old, and Janny was grown up, she began to wonder what would become of her adopted child when she was gone. She could not get her living like other girls, and maybe she would be taken to the workhouse after all. Flowers were her delight, and by them she must live: but how? Old Hundred had money in the savings-bank. How she had contrived to accumulate it nobody knew. She had spent her days in hard labour in the fields, while Janny had kept house meekly and tidily, alternately "cleaning up," knitting, and tending her flowers. Janny's earnings had been scanty, consisting of the sale of a pair of stockings or a bunch of flowers now and then on market days. However, Old Hundred was not only strong-minded but energetic, and, at past seventy, resolved to build her a house. After much bartering, she procured a bit of waste wayside, hedge-row land at a ground rent of one pound per annum. She was still hale and kept her "strong arms," so, with Janny's help, she dug and delved until she levelled a square piece of the ground as a foundation. This accomplished, they slowly raised four mud walls, leaving spaces for the door and a window on either side. Old Hundred displayed not only architectural but mathematical genius, for she had her "first principles" well defined. "Straight as a line, thick, and even," were her orders to Janny. And so the two women worked on, refusing other aid—worked only at odd hours—until they reached the chimney. "The chimbley daunted me," quoth Old Hundred, "for I wasn't tall enough; so I got big Tom Nicholas to put him up, and bad enough he was doing it. Take the cup and pipe from the mouths of them men, and they are fit for nothing but to gaape. And he was making my chimbley smoke almost as much as himself."

Nevertheless, the shell was completed after many months' labour. It would be hard to say how the women raftered and thatched it, but that task was also accomplished. When to this was added a door, bestowed by a neighbouring farmer, and two windows, each containing four panes of glass, the capability of the fair sex to achieve all that the darker do can no longer be disputed. The plastering, white and yellow washing, and general ornamentation were comparatively easy: "and then," said Old Hundred, proudly, "I had a house of my own. I was only seventy, and Janny was gone twenty. I counted upon making my fourscore, and then leaving her the house; but here I am still, and Janny a'most as old as I was then!"

Yes, they lived nearly forty years together in this hut. Janny, the weaker vessel, became the stronger. Early and late was the simple-

minded woman to be seen in the garden—digging, watering, pruning, planting, training, with a love and patience the wisest might have envied. A love, too, so pure and unselfish that an angel need not have blushed to own it—a love for the only friend she had ever known, and for those most beautiful of the Father's works—flowers. Her old friend was first in her affections, her flowers second, while in her heart dwelt a simple religion that taught her to love God without fear. Poor Janny was not wise, but she was good and humble, and possibly the wisest of us might envy her.

As years went on, she tended the guardian of her childhood and youth with unobtrusive care, perceiving intuitively that Old Hundred did not like to be thought slowly but surely passing work. We none of us do. It was a pleasure to enter the cottage, as well as to stand without. The room was as neat as hands could make it. The chimney-corner shone with wash of every hue, the hearth and hot-bal fire were whitened, the mud floor displayed an occasional brick reddened by ruddle, the little windows were full of geraniums.

Old Hundred possessed an oak corner cupboard and chest that would have delighted the antiquary. They were carved and blackened by age, and under Janny's care shone like ebony. So did the less valuable furniture. Within the cupboard was a display of china, as dear to its possessors as is the antiquated porcelain of this our age to the ladies bitten by chinamania.

Old Hundred, although born gifted with independence, was too strong-minded to object to parish relief when the root of her independence —her strength—grew rotten in the ground. But they well-nigh lived on the garden, for the parish half-crown could not keep them. In summer-time people came from Trefavon to see the old woman, and question her about her age. This led to tea and strawberries in the pretty garden, and the purchase of fruit and flowers. It was pleasant to see Old Hundred surrounded by smart young people, while Janny busily prepared hot water and tea-cups, and gathered her treasures. On these occasions, the elder would pour forth her history, while the younger served.

"Yes, I'm in my hundred and eight. I knew your great great grandfather, as was Lawyer Penruddock, Trefavon, and a shark he was, yes sure. See you Janny! They are saying she's by the head, and she is doing everything. I haven't earned anything to speak of these ten years or more, but she works for me. When the weather is warm, she is putting me here by the door while she goes to town to sell her garden stuff. When she comes back, she helps me into the house, and makes me a cup o' tea, with sugar and white bread, and a pinch o' snuff. The Lord had his intentions when he put into my mind to bring up the orphan. If I had followed that old relieving officer's advice, and sent her to the workus, I should be there myself now, and the parish

wishing me dead. Now they take a pride in me, because I've lived my five score years and ten, born, growed, and aged, amongst 'em. Very little makes us proud. For my part, I'm not proud, for if my life seems long to them 'tis short to me, though I've earnt my bread and been beholden to nobody for four-score years. Show me the man as can say as much. Ha! ha! But Janny's turning sixty now, and 'tis time I was gone, or she'll be getting weak and old likewise. Still I'm happy with her, and she'll be lonesome without me. But I bide the Lord's time. He knows best."

While we have been recalling Old Hundred's history, the spring sun has turned the world into sunset gold, and the birds are beginning to twitter sleepily. Still the cottage is untenanted. Where is Janny? We know where her benefactress is. She has ended her long life peacefully, and sleeps her still longer sleep in yonder churchyard. A few months ago, her death and great age were recorded in the local papers, and people speculated upon them, as we do when anything occurs beyond the usual run of events. But few thought of Janny, who was the only human being to weep over the aged woman's grave. She, who had been told to expect her friend's death for forty years, did not realize it when it came. Who does? But her lonely heart sank never to rise into cheerful pulsation again.

Old Hundred died in winter, so Janny had not even the consolation of her flowers. She had lost her all at once. She must have starved but for kind friends—for everyone liked the gentle, simple woman. But a change came with her first snowdrop, and it was curious to see that life had once more a charm for her. She began mechanically to watch one flower after another arise from its winter sleep, and then to arrange her garden. The first snowdrops were transplanted to her friend's grave, and were succeeded by primrose and violet roots, so that Janny had soon two gardens to tend, for as long as the parish would let her. It was evident that she could no longer support herself. She might keep her cottage and garden neat, and, from long habit, sell her flowers and fruit, but this was not sufficient. The parish was appealed to, and asked to continue the small dole awarded to Old Hundred, but the board refused. So long as Janny possessed a smart cottage and productive flower-garden, she could not need parish relief. She must leave them, and go into the union-house. It was certainly the least expensive measure, for she would soon die deprived of her flowers.

Influential friends have interceded for her, but hitherto without success. During Old Hundred's life, she was accustomed to go weekly to the union to receive the half-crown, and we understand she continues, habitually, the visit. We suddenly remember that this is Saturday, and that she has been engaged on the quest to-day; if so, she cannot be long in returning, for she is not given to tarry: so we will wait and see

what success she has had. Half a crown a week. It does not seem much, but her life hangs on it.

We inhale the perfume of the violets, and recall the days when it was happiness to hunt them out from the furze bushes and thorns of common and hedge-row ; then we lament over their absence from this wild country, as indigenous gifts. But next to gathering them in the fields is culling them in a cottage garden, so we rob Janny of one or two, and are thankful that God has bestowed on rich and poor alike the common treasures of fresh air, perfume, and sweet sound.

There *is* Janny walking up the primrose lane ! Her step is certainly more elastic than when we met last. Now she stoops towards the primroses, now looks into the hawthorn-hedge as if to see whether the buds are bursting. She has an empty basket on her arm, an old grey cloak over her shoulders, and a tidy crape-bound hat on her head. She is a spare, weakly woman with a calm, pale face, but nothing hard, vulgar, or coarse in form or expression. She holds her head on one side, and drops her slight figure like a water-rush. It is her way. Knowing her story, you look upon her with pity, respect, and a certain amount of affection. She toils up the little steps in the primrose-bank, opens the wicket in the hedge, and seeing us, approaches almost briskly. She holds up a half-crown, exclaiming, " They have given it to me again. I may stay on here. I may keep my flowers. I shall die where mother died, and sleep where she sleeps. It is the Lord's will."

This unusually long speech overcomes her, and she bursts into tears. We accompany her into the cottage, admire its neatness, ask for some tea, and so help her to begin life again. She looks about her dreamily, then awakes to dim consciousness of existence. That parish half-crown has set the machine going once more, and promises of future strawberry parties and flower buyers help to turn the wheels.

" Poor old mother ! " she says, meekly, glancing at the door where Old Hundred sat.

" She is here, only you cannot see her," we venture.

" Then I will put her chair."

A smile kindles the pale face as Janny rises and reverently places the seat near the open door.

All is as it should be : she is no longer alone. In some strange way she realizes the unseen.

As we take our departure, she makes a nosegay. Wall-flowers, daffodils, primroses, and the one treasured anemone are fastened together, while a separate bunch of violets is carefully added. The face has lost its trouble and resumed its calm.

" She will be happy again within the mud walls she helped to rear," we murmur, as we wander back through the primrose lane.

A BROKEN VOYAGE.

THIS narrative is true in all its details. It has often been in my mind to give it to the public. Though I do not know that I should ever have done so, but for the attention lately called to the subject by Mr. Plimsoll. Unfortunately, as I have learnt since, it is but one case out of many.

Some few years ago, in the month of January, I had been on shore about four weeks, and was thinking of going afloat again, when the following letter was delivered to my father by the morning post.

"THE MITRE, LIVERPOOL, *January 21st.*

"MY DEAR SIR,—I arrived here a few days since, and am well pleased with my new command—the Asia. If your son is still disengaged, he may join at once as second officer. Hoping you are well, I am,

"Yours very truly,

"JOHN ENGLISH."

"Who is he?" I asked. "Do you know him?"

"I don't know much of him. I was introduced to him a week or two ago by a firm of brokers in the City, where I had called to say you were looking out for a berth. Captain English told me he was going to Liverpool to take the command of a fine ship chartered for India. He seemed a very agreeable man, and I think you cannot do better than accept this offer."

Down I went to Liverpool, all prepared. The Mitre proved to be a comfortable inn near the river and to the dock in which the ship lay; and I hastened to report myself.

"Is Captain English within?" I inquired of a smart, merry-looking young woman in the bar. Instead of replying, she took a rapid but comprehensive survey of me, and spoke: "I suppose you are the second mate?" This was tolerably cool, I thought; however, I could but answer in the affirmative.

"The captain has just gone out. He expected you this afternoon, and left word that if you arrived you could wait for him: he won't be long away. Will you walk into the parlour and sit down?"

I preferred to take a walk out and look at the neighbourhood. In half an hour I went back again, but Captain English had not returned. I began relating to the barmaid a ludicrous accident I had just witnessed, and we were both laughing over it, when she suddenly stopped, and spoke.

"Oh, here is Captain English."

A tall, rather portly, pleasant-looking man of about five-and-forty years was entering. I liked his looks directly, stepped forward, and introduced myself.

"Ah, Mr. W.," he replied, in a rich, cheery tone, as he held out his hand to me, "I am glad to see you. There is a deal of work going on on board, and we have wanted you badly for some days past. Where are you staying?"

"Nowhere as yet, sir."

"Come and stay here, then. You can't do better; and the charges are reasonable."

For some reasons I should have preferred living away from the captain's quarters. However, the hint could not be ignored, and my room was ordered.

I found later that the landlord of this inn was one Richard Prim, a retired skipper, who had once been a shipmate of Captain English. Prim had a large circle of friends and acquaintances, and the Mitre flourished accordingly. He also carried on the business of ship's smith, and did well at it.

"Now," said Captain English to me, "you had better go and take a look at the ship, and make acquaintance with Mr. Sterner, the chief officer. You will then be all ready for turning to in the morning at six o'clock."

"Very good, sir; I'll go at once," was my answer. And I had reached the doorway when he called me back.

"Mr. W., I have a word to say:" and his blue eyes darkened and looked hard and stern. Until now he had been all smiles and good humour, and the change was striking. It gave me his measure at once: a good master to a good man: but the saints help the one who did not please him.

"Mr. W.," he began, carefully shutting the parlour door, "I like your appearance. Judging from your testimonials, I believe you will suit me: and I will, for your sake, offer you a word of advice. Give the two barmaids in this house a wide berth. One is the daughter of the landlord, the other is his niece. They are lively, good-natured young women, but rather free and easy."

I wondered what on earth he was driving at.

"Don't get too intimate with them. That's all.—You can go on board now. You will not find things looking very cheerful there. The ship has been lying up for some months, and looks dirty and out of order. The dust from the cargo, too, does not improve matters. However, we'll get her to rights by-and-by."

It was barely five minutes' walk to the ship. As I went along I reflected upon the captain's "one bit of advice." I could make nothing of it, and never could afterwards. It puzzled me: not so

much then as later. The two damsels were "free and easy" as to laughing and talking, but I saw no other harm in them. A sudden turn, and I came in sight of the Asia. One glance at her masts told me she was American built. In another minute I was standing alongside of her on the dock quay. The captain's description was not overdrawn. I thought I had never before seen a ship in such an untidy, filthy state. It gave me the blues to look at her.

The Asia was what is called, in America, "down-east built," about 1500 tons burthen. There was a deck-house, aft, for the captain and officers, and one between the fore and main hatchways for the crew. It contained also a sail locker, store-room, and the galley. A short topgallant forecastle and a "monkey" poop completed the deck plan.

She was being loaded with patent fuel. Square blocks of coal dust, tar, &c., compressed together, each about a foot long and half as thick. Many of these were piled up on the deck, and some were lying about, loose and broken. Everything was coated thickly with dust from the stuff: decks, masts, houses, bulwarks, &c. The weather had been showery during the day, and the rain had washed the dust and dirt off in streaks and patches all about the ship: the little pools on the decks looked like ink. Most of the rigging was adrift. Some of the yards were across, others on deck, and all "anyhow"; the tops of the deck-houses were lumbered up, several feet high, with all sorts of gear: hawsers, ropes, oars, spare planks. Altogether she was a most melancholy object. I was contemplating the state of things, when the chief officer came out of the cabin. His appearance was in keeping with the ship's. His face was grimed with dust, and the rain had drawn streaks on it as on the sides of the houses. He was a little man, good-tempered looking, about forty apparently.

Mr. Sterner did not know much about the ship. When he joined her, a few days before, only the ship-keeper was by the ship, which had been brought round from the North by a crew of runners, and he had been engaged since she came into dock. Sterner told me the Asia was the property of a very rich man, who had recently gone into the shipowning line. She was the first of a numerous fleet he intended to sail. The Europe and India Steamship Company had chartered her to convey patent fuel to Calcutta, and she was to load for home at some one or other of the Indian ports. He thought she looked like a pretty good sea-boat. She was dirty and a perfect wreck aloft, but the riggers and painters would alter that. A large quantity of stores had come down from London, and waited my arrival to be taken on board. I returned to the Mitre not at all captivated by the ship's appearance.

The next morning, shortly after six o'clock, I went on board. Four hands were pumping the ship out, not at all a usual operation in dock. After about twenty minutes, seeing she did not "suck," I

inquired of the chief officer how long she had been standing. "Since last night," he replied. "We pump her out at six o'clock, morning and evening."

"What a deal of water she must make!"

"Pretty well; but she has been lying up all last summer. Her top sides are bound to leak a goodish bit as the cargo puts her down in the water. They'll 'take up' by-and-by."

This was reasonable enough, and I thought no more of it at the time, although it took three-quarters of an hour to dry her out.

When I found this continued as a regular thing, night and morning, I did not half like it, and seized an opportunity of taking a look at the ship below. She seemed pretty old, and looked as if she had been used to hard work and plenty of it. There was nothing in particular, however, to complain of, that I could see. The captain said she'd take up by-and-by; the mate seemed quite complacent about it all; so I could only make up my mind that matters would be all right in time.

We were to sail in about a week's time, and everything had yet to be done to get the ship ready for sea. In all my experience I never had such a week's work before or since. Nearly all the stores came from London. The owner would have the best of everything, and plenty of it; and the best could only, he believed, be procured there. The ship, certainly, was found in a most liberal manner. The pay was good—as high as on board any sailing ship in the port; and judging from the quantity of luxuries, wines, &c., put on board, we were to live like fighting-cocks. Even the new sails were sent down from London—and a nice job they gave us. Of course not one fitted properly. They had all to be unbent and carted up to a sail-loft, costing no end of money for alterations. Even then they never "set" properly. Before the end of the week the loading was completed, and all things were ship-shape. One could scarcely have recognized in the clean, smart-looking ship, the dirty wreck of a few days ago.

It was on the second day after I joined, that the owner, Mr. Buckle, had arrived at the Mitre from London. "Very condescending in so rich and great a man to take up his quarters here," remarked Miss Prim, "but he does it to be with Captain English."

Mr. Buckle was a most courteous, gentlemanly man, wearing light gold-rimmed spectacles. His face looked kindness itself. He came frequently on board, and quite won the hearts of all hands by his kindness and suavity. He was liberal to a degree. The officers had only to suggest to him that a thing was required, and it was ordered at once. One day, in shifting the hawser, I noticed several rotten places in it. Mr. Buckle was standing by at the time, and I pointed it out to him. A new hawser was ordered instantly. In short, although the bulk of the stores and other things had come from London, many

articles had to be got in Liverpool; ship-chandlers, sail-makers, and others were extensively patronised by Mr. Buckle. Prim got his share of it by supplying new anchors, a chain cable, and no end of ironwork. It oozed out that Mr. Buckle was about purchasing a monster of a ship in London, to follow the Asia out of Liverpool. All the tradespeople, including Prim, looked forward to making a rare good thing out of Mr. Buckle's ship. Towards me he seemed to have a special favour, and whispered, as he shook hands with me at parting, that I should get a chief's berth next time in one of his magnificent ships. Three days before we sailed, Mr. Buckle returned to London.

Nevertheless, I could not feel easy in my mind about the ship herself—the Asia. She certainly made somewhat less water day by day: but she leaked far too much, in my opinion, for a ship lying quietly in dock. Besides this, she was very deep in the water. The freight was high. The more cargo she carried, the more money the owner would pocket. This was evidently the principle which had regulated the quantity taken on board. And she was loaded, as the saying goes, "like a sand barge." The chief officer and I talked it over. He did not seem at all anxious. The captain laughed outright at the whole thing, only repeating that she'd "take up" by-and-by.

We signed articles the day Mr. Buckle left—a Friday—and a first-rate crew we got, nearly all Welshmen. One of them, David Evans, was equal to any two men in Liverpool. He was about six feet and a half high—broad and strong in proportion. I mentally decided to have him in my watch, if possible. Monday was our sailing day. Indeed, we were *now* ready for sea, and only waited for water enough to float us over the dock sill.

On the Saturday morning I went on board at six o'clock. There was no general work doing; I had merely to see that the ship was properly pumped out. As usual, there was a good deal of water in her—far more than I liked to see. On returning to the Mitre for breakfast, I found the place in a commotion. Captain English had gone suddenly mad.

"Mad!" I said to one of the barmaids, Julia, who had given me the information and was crying over it. "What is it that you mean? Captain English was well and hearty last night."

"All the same, Mr. W., he is mad now. The doctor can make nothing of him, poor gentleman."

Captain English was in bed, and I went to his room. He gazed steadily at me. My first thought was, "Well, if he is mad, he does not look it." I had never seen *intelligence* more plainly shine out of a pair of eyes. "Good morning, sir," I said, advancing to the bed-side. "I am sorry to hear you are not well." His reply startled me: although it was given in his usual tone and manner.

"Ah, Mr. Sterner, good morning. All ready for sea, eh! Very well;

I'll be on board presently. You can be passing the hawser in the meanwhile."

I looked across the bed at the doctor. An expressive lifting of the eyebrows was his only response. At that moment Mrs. Prim came in. "Mary Ann," he said to her (and we all knew this to be the name of a servant-maid in his house in London), "tell Mrs. English to have my things looked out. I am going to Liverpool this afternoon."

He was evidently quite out of his mind. "What can have caused it?" I asked of the doctor, beckoning him out of the room.

"Can't say," was the answer, given with a shrug of the shoulders. "It seems a most singular case. Quite well last night on going to bed, and mad this morning. He does not *look* mad either: that is the most curious part of it. His eye is as steady and calm as possible."

"Will he soon recover?"

"Don't know at all. I cannot give an opinion just yet. We must wait and see how the day passes. If, towards evening, there is no change, Doctor Sims should be called in. He is by far the best man in these cases."

After breakfast, Prim telegraphed to Mr. Buckle, asking instructions. Back came the answer, "I am extremely distressed at the sad news. You will receive a letter from me to-morrow morning."

In the evening there was no improvement. Captain English was constantly rambling in his mind —talking nonsense on twenty different subjects. At one time he imagined himself at home. Then in Liverpool. Sometimes he was on board, giving orders. I went into the room during the dinner hour. As I opened the door he fixed his eyes upon me. "Come in, Mr. W." His look was all intelligence: he evidently recognized me. But he was fancying himself on board at sea. "How is her head, Mr. W.? How's the wind?" he continued; and it seemed that he was imagining answers to his questions. "West nor'-west, eh! Stiff breeze! Inclining to free? Very good. Keep her off a point, and check the upper yards a bit. And, I say, don't be afraid of her. Everything is good aloft. Cost enough in Liverpool. You can give her a good hard lick. There, that'll do. If the wind frees, keep her up a point again. Let me know if there is any change." All this, of itself, was as lucid as possible. His eyes, above all, astonished me—still as clear and steady as could be.

Dr. Sims was called in; and came. I was present. He put a few questions to the captain, but received such extravagant, absurd answers that he soon ceased asking any. He inquired of Mrs. Prim about his habits. "Did he drink?" "Oh dear, no," she replied; "quite the contrary. Scarcely took a glassful of ale with his dinner." "Had he experienced any trouble of late?" "No, not that she ever heard of. He had been a good deal worried about the ship during the

last week; getting her ready for sea. There were so many things he had to think of."

Doctor Sims could make nothing of the case—said it quite set at naught all his previous experience. The captain was as quiet as need be—taking his meals regularly, as usual.

In the morning a letter arrived from the owner. It was impossible for him to leave London just then. Prim was requested to take the management of affairs, and, if necessary, appoint a commander to the Asia in the place of Captain English. The ship must absolutely *sail to time.*

Well, the end of it was, that a Captain Roberts was appointed. Prim knew him well, and he was looking out for a ship. Our spirits sank to zero when we saw the man. At least, mine did; I can't answer for Sterner's. The new skipper was a "caution"; ugly, discourteous, stern; nothing of his face to be seen for hair, except a narrow strip of forehead, and a nose that curled up like a dog's tail. Worse than all, he was utterly uncultivated; bearish and surly, and seemed never in his life to have spoken with gentlemen. We could not help ourselves. All who had signed articles with Captain English *must* sail in the ship, or desert. This *I* could not do. The spirit was willing; but the penalty attaching was an effectual disperser of rebellious thoughts.

I believe every man on board shared my feelings, more or less, in this respect. The contrast Captain Roberts presented to his predecessor was enough to account for the fact. They had signed to sail under a gentleman. Nothing, scarcely, would have induced them to do so with so rough, evil-looking, and common a skipper.

Monday morning broke in due course. The weather was dull, but mild for the time of year. The wind westerly and light. We left the dock at ten o'clock. Collected on the pier-head to bid us a last "pleasant voyage" were most of the tradesmen who had supplied the ship, Prim amongst them.

Captain English was said to be improving. The doctors thought there was a change for the better. Prim called this out to me. "I hope he is; I'm awfully sorry it ever happened," I answered, significantly.

"Slack away, off there; slack away!" roared out the pilot. "What the deuce are you about?" Talking to Prim, I had allowed the stern rope to slacken a little.

"Slack it is. All slack aft!" And we passed out between the pier-heads. The last thing I heard as we got into the river was a remark of the dock-keeper to one of his men.

"I say, Ned, she's thundering deep for the voyage she's going!"

He might well say so. She *was* deep. Frightfully deep for a leaky ship. I vow I felt half heart-sick as I thought of it all: the overladen, leaky ship, and the new skipper. There existed no compulsory survey, no load-line. Such things were not talked of then.

We cleared the dock, and, with a powerful tug ahead, made good way down the river. Our orders were to tow past Holyhead, well into the Irish Channel. The next morning the wind had "northered" a little, so we made sail; the tug cast off our hawser, and wishing us luck, steamed back toward Liverpool.

For four days we had a leading wind, light to moderate, with smooth water, which took us well away from the land. On the fifth day it backed into the south-west, but kept moderate.

All this time the ship did not seem to make any more water. Every four hours she was pumped, and a quarter of an hour's good spell generally sucked her dry.

On the sixth day after we left Liverpool, the wind freshened up, a heavy swell setting in at the same time from the south'ard and west'ard. At nightfall we could just carry topgallant-sails. The barometer fell slowly but steadily. At 11 P.M. the topgallant-sails were furled. The ship was pitching a good deal, and at seven bells there was a long spell of pumping out.

The glass continued steadily falling, but the wind did not increase any more till noon. The upper fore and maintop-sails were reefed and the mizzen one furled. The sea and swell had much increased. What was of far more importance, our leak (or leaks) had increased also. It took us nearly three-quarters of an hour every four hours to pump the ship out.

That night, about ten o'clock, the gale, which had been gradually working its way across the Atlantic, came up to us. It *was* a gale, rattling down upon the ship at last all at once, like a cartload of bricks. The weather was fearful. The night was dark as pitch. The wind blew half a hurricane. The rain fell in sheets, while the sea made clean breaches over the ship, nearly drowning us at times, and keeping us up to the knees in water on deck. To crown all, it was bitterly cold.

Working under such circumstances was half killing. Landsmen can form no idea of it: or of the terrible hardships Jack—and his master too—encounter at times. I, a hardened sailor, sometimes wonder how it is done, and borne.

For eight solid hours we worked away. I expected we should never get the sails in "whole." At length we had the ship hove to under the lower maintop-sail. We were all tired out, but there was no rest for us. After a meal of salt beef and biscuit, washed down with cold water, and, oh luxury! seasoned with a pipe, the ship had to be pumped out.

"All hands pump ship," was now the order. It took *four hours* to dry her out. This was fearful. One watch was then told to "go below," and all hands were sent to breakfast.

The wind had continued to blow as hard as ever. The heavy cross

sea increased, and the ship laboured and strained continually. The chief officer and I could appreciate how well she had "taken up." Instead of taking up she had opened out, and now leaked like a basket. And no wonder. An old, worn-out, soft-wood ship, loaded like a sand barge with patent fuel.

Of all cargoes it is one of the very worst; the most trying to a ship. It is heavy, stows very close, and has about as much spring in it as so much lead. The poor old hooker was shaken to pieces.

All that day and next night the wind and sea continued unchanged. The pumps were scarcely left. But for the good, powerful, new ones, lately fitted, the ship would have gone down like a stone under our feet. Probably not one life would have been saved: for what could the boats have done in such a terrible sea? And the chances are, the boats would have been knocked to pieces in the getting out. There was nothing for it but to keep on pumping, and hope for moderate weather.

Alas, our hopes proved vain. The wind continued. It was a fearful time. The ship pitched and rolled and lurched most heavily. She was literally knocked about like a cork in the tremendous cross sea running. The decks were constantly half full of water. Occasionally a heavier wave than usual would break on board, carrying all before it, and washing away the men from the pumps. We were all more or less bruised and otherwise injured—officers as well as men. Since the bad weather set in, the former had taken their full share of pumping, and more than their share of the other work. The captain was the only "officer," now: the constant pumping had made the rest of the ship's company on a perfect equality as regards work. This constant pumping was very trying. At last we got bell ropes fitted—short ropes with an iron ring (called a thimble) spliced into one end. The thimbles were slipped over the handles, and the men "tailed on" to the ropes to pull the handles round. This was much less fatiguing than the incessant bending over them.

Morning broke on the third day, and there was no sign of the weather moderating. The leaking had increased; and the pumps, going all the time, scarcely kept her free. It seemed as though we were doomed to a watery grave.

At about eight o'clock the men came aft in a body, and asked to speak to the captain. Big David Evans was spokesman.

The skipper came out of his cabin. "Well, men, what is it?"

"Well, now, Captain Roberts, you see we have very hard work. It's not watch and watch now. It's all hands day and night, and we are getting very tired. And besides, we are up to the neck in water when she ships a heavy sea. Any way, the decks are half full of water all the time, and we are all wet through and the weather is very cold. There is plenty of grog on board: you might give us some rum."

The request was refused. Captain Roberts assured the men that to give rum, or any similar poison, would be against his "principles." He would order them some good hot coffee. While he was speaking, the ship had fallen off the wind, and she took a heavy weather roll. A tremendous sea broke on board over the main rigging. It carried all hands, captain and all, in a heap down to leeward, and dashed them against the bulwarks. And a fortunate thing it was that it did not wash any of them overboard.

After some minutes of shaking, stamping, and not a little swearing —for Jack swears a good deal sometimes as a safety-valve, but means no harm by it—the conference was reopened. David Evans, seeing no chance of the grog—for Roberts, as we had learnt, was a temperance captain—asked for something else that was not grog: ham and fresh butter. The request was so absurd that I burst out laughing: but, to my intense astonishment, it was granted without a dissenting word. Was the skipper taking up the notion that the hams and other good stores on board would never be of use, save to dead men? But he must have known that the one sole chance for our lives was to keep the pumps going: and men cannot work day and night unless they are fed.

All hands turned to at the pumps, and the steward made ready a hearty meal. Ham, cheese, fresh butter, and a saucepanful of good strong coffee. It did the men good, poor fellows: who quitted it to man the pumps again.

This continued. A temping meal every two hours, and the work at the pumps perpetually. It was the alternate routine throughout that day. The wind did not moderate. On the contrary, the sea was, if anything, heavier; the squalls were most furious; and the ship laboured fearfully. At four o'clock the carpenter sounded the well, and said the water was slowly gaining on the pumps. The announcement struck a sudden dismay on all who heard it.

"Now, boys," said I, by way of encouragement, "this won't do. Let us give her a proper, good doing for an hour, and see if we can't make the sounding rod tell another tale." The men responded cheerfully to the appeal. The bell ropes were manned. One of them struck up a sea song with a loud chorus. The others joined in heartily and worked with a will. The fly-wheels spun round with a vengeance.

But when the well was next sounded, it was found that the water had gained on the ship. She was doomed—if we kept on our course. The men, disheartened, held a conference amongst themselves. Their lives were dear to them, their families at home were dear to them, and they resolved to see the captain. One chance remained for us—the putting back; and they would ask him to risk it.

I happened to be standing by the cabin door, when a lot of them came up, David Evans spokesman.

"Mr. W., we want to speak to the captain, if you please, sir."

I turned into the cabin and reported to the skipper. He went out, audibly wondering what they could want now. David Evans respectfully addressed him.

"Captain Roberts," said he, "we think you must see how it is with the ship. She's an old broken hull that can never last the voyage out. But for this gale, we might perhaps have got her to the Cape: but she'd never have lived through the storms off there. We have come to ask you, sir, to put her back. You see, sir, we are all tired out, and the water's gaining on us. There is no sign of any change; in twenty-four hours all hands will be knocked up, and down we must go. Will you please put the ship before the wind, sir, and run her back?"

The skipper was taken flat aback at the request, and flew into a passion. "Put back!" he roared out. "Have you all gone mad? You'd better say at once that you want to take charge of the ship. But I'll let you know who's master here. Run her! Never. Mr. W., start the pumps going immediately. The first man of you that says another word, I'll put him in irons!"

Not a man of them moved. David Evans began again, gently enough.

"'Deed, sir, there's no need for you to get into such a way. No one speaks of taking charge. We have come aft and spoke to you in a civil and quiet manner. Some of us has been to sea so long as you, and knows just as much about a ship as you do, sir. Well, now, Captain Roberts, we've asked you, respectfully, to do the only thing that can save us. You won't do it. *I'll* pump no more: and there's not a man among us will either. 'Tis better to let her go down quietly. We'll stand a chance, perhaps, then, for our lives when the time comes. If we go on pumping till she's ready to sink, we will be so knocked up not one of us will be able to do anything for himself. So, now, sir, you can do as you like. Your life is as much consequence to you as mine is to me. If you keep her here she will sink before midnight, and you'll have to take your chance with the rest. *But, pump we won't.* And now you can put me in irons—that is, you can *try* it. 'Twill be a bad time the man will have of it who does try."

There was that in the look and in the quiet, determined tone of the man that made the skipper look twice before he answered. The men were evidently determined to stand by one another. How could he act against such odds? He could not iron them all—or what would become of the pumps? Besides, his life perhaps *was* of value to him; and it was impossible that he had failed to discover the kind of ship in which he had been sent to sea. As a sailor, Roberts was no fool: and, when not in a passion, he had his share of common sense. His mind was already made up what to do, but it is customary in such cases to make a show of consulting with the officers. Asking us to walk into his cabin, he called the carpenter.

"Carpenter," he said, coldly and sternly, "what is your opinion of the state of the ship? Speak out just what you think."

"Well, sir, if you don't keep her away at once, I fear it may be too late soon."

"Mr. Sterner, you heard what the men said, and you know the state of things. What do you say to it all?"

"If you ask for my candid opinion, Captain Roberts, I must say I consider that it ought to have been done twenty-four hours ago. I thought of suggesting it to you, but did not like to do so. You might have thought I wished to interfere where I should not."

"Mr. W.?"

"I say keep her away, sir. Another day or two like the last, and I, for one, should be quite knocked up. The men have worked splendidly, but they are not steam-engines."

"Very well, then. Let it be done at once."

We went on deck. The skipper took a long, anxious look to windward, mentally measuring the size and height of the waves. "Clear away the foretopmast staysail," he sang out.

Watching for a smooth chance, he gave the order to hoist away. The sail quickly set. The helm was put up, and the lee main braced, checked a foot or two, just to "ease" the wind out of the topsail.

It was an anxious moment. The manœuvre was one of considerable danger. As the ship got the sea abeam, a tremendous wave was seen curling up—roaring and dashing towards us. "Hold on, for your lives, men," shouted the skipper. And it was a miracle that we were not all engulfed then and there. The decks were filled up chock full, level with the rails. The ship quivered from stem to stern, and felt as if she were settling down. Fortunately, a good portion of the bulwarks had been washed away, and the water found its way quickly off the deck. The ship now paid off rapidly. In five minutes we were going along "dead before it." The force of the wind was felt much less than when we were head to it. The sea, however, was very heavy. One huge wave came roaring up astern, looking like a mountain. The ship had not got way enough on, and it "pooped" her. The shock was terrific. I fully expected we were gone *this* time. It did, however, no damage beyond sweeping the decks, and carrying everything movable on them forward in a heap. This was the last sea we shipped. The foresail had been loosed, the sheets were hauled aft, and the ship moved faster through the water. Soon the whole topsails were set. We carried double topsails—the finest and handiest thing ever invented for a ship. All of us were soaking wet, and the weather was bitterly cold. But there was no rest or respite from work. "Pump ship!" was again the cry. And we pumped all night long; only ceasing occasionally for a quarter of an hour to get a feed and some hot coffee. Round went the pumps,

click-clanging at every revolution of the fly-wheel. Those pumps were our sole chance for life.

Towards morning the wind moderated, and before noon we had the maintop-gallant sail set. The sea too was much less heavy. But the leaking continued. The pumps were scarcely left. We had "watch and watch" again after this, but were obliged to keep pumping all the time when not trimming or making sail.

On the fourth morning we took a pilot on board off Point Lynas. A fair wind carried us up, and that night we dropped anchor in the river off Liverpool, just by the dock we had left a fortnight before.

We had, indeed, had a most marvellous and providential escape from death. *Humanly* speaking, nothing but the splendid new pumps kept the ship afloat. And these were fitted more by good luck than anything else. The old ones were condemned, and none too soon, when the ship was preparing to take in cargo. The pump maker inquired personally of Mr. Buckle in our presence—that is, mine and Sterner's—whether he should supply the best pumps. Of course, replied liberal Mr. Buckle. And the man did it.

But the pumps would have been of no use after a time, but for the splendid set of men we had. All were good, hardworking, *able seamen*. A term more misused nowadays than any other I know of.

The return of the Asia into port caused no small commotion. Those who were interested came flocking down to look at her, and at us escaped sailors. Prim was there, watching us haul in.

But startling tidings awaited us: and the complacent faces which had watched us away were changed to gloom now. Prim came on board, looking as black as midnight.

"You see we are back alive, Prim," I said. "Had a hard fight for it, though."

"Worse luck," retorted Prim.

"Worse luck! What do you mean?"

"Been a deuced sight better if the broken old hulk had gone down, body and bones," he growled. "Might have stood a chance of getting our money back out of the insurance then."

The owner of the Asia, Mr. Buckle, had been declared bankrupt. Sterner and I could not have received the news with more incredulity had we been told that we had been declared it. That great and rich man, Buckle!—who was the owner of the new line of ships about to be launched, and meant to have made the fortune of us all!

It was even so. The great Mr. Buckle was a bankrupt. And as he had paid the people in promissory notes, and the notes were worthless—for the estate would not realize a shilling in the pound, there being in fact no estate to realize upon—no wonder the faces were long. We had looked upon him at Liverpool as a second Rothschild.

And what of Captain English? How was he? Captain English

had recovered as speedily as he was taken, we were told. The very day we had sailed out of port, he was himself again, and went up to London. Dr. Sims considered it the most extraordinary case ever brought under his notice, and meant to send it to the *Lancet*.

I went up to the Mitre: and there heard worse whispers. The rich, kind, gentlemanly Mr. Buckle was called a scoundrel and a swindler; and it was Mrs. Prim who called him so to me, shut up with her in the bar parlour. And she confessed that she could not make out Captain English—that is, his illness—but of course it did not do to say so. When he was informed, upon his recovery, that the Asia had gone out of port but two hours before, he nearly wept with vexation at not having sailed in her, and at having been superseded in the command.

Mrs. Prim was naturally as sore as her husband upon the score of the bankruptcy, and disclosed to me what she knew. No doubt it was a relief to her to do it. Upon the first intimation of it reaching Prim, she said, he had taken the next train to London, fully persuaded that the news could not be true. He reached London at night, and the next morning went to find out Mr. Buckle's offices—the address of which he had fortunately pencilled down in an odd corner of his pocket-book—and found them in a dingy court off Lime Street. It was a shabby-looking place, and he went wondering up the shaky and dirty stairs, and reached the second-floor. Yes: there were two doors bearing the name, "Mr. P. Buckle:" on one was written "Private," on the other "Clerks' Office." Prim knocked at the latter, and was told, in a shrill, piping, treble voice, to come in.

The room was as shabby as the stairs: nothing in but an old desk, and a chair or two, and a sharp-looking boy of fourteen or fifteen years, the owner of the thin voice. Prim took it all in at a glance. He concluded he must have got the address, by some extraordinary mistake, of another Mr. Buckle. *This* could not be the "offices" in London which that gentleman and Captain English had often spoken of with as much respect as though they had been built of gold.

"Is this Mr. Buckle's office?"

"Yes, sir."

Prim hardly knew how to put it. "I mean Mr. Buckle the shipowner. His ship, the Asia, has just sailed from Liverpool."

"All right," said the sharp boy.

"Is Mr. Buckle in?"

"No, sir. Gone in the country on business."

This was a check. "When do you expect him back?"

"Don't know at all. He may be away some days, or longer."

"What part of the country is he gone to?"

"Can't tell for sure. Cornwall, or somewhere."

"Can I see the head clerk—or manager?"

"There is no head clerk—except me."

"*You!*" cried Richard Prim. "But you are not the only clerk?"

"Yes, I am, sir."

Of all astounding revelations! Prim began to feel utterly bewildered.

"Is there *nobody* I can make inquiries of? I've come all the way from Liverpool on purpose."

"Don't know of anybody, sir," replied the boy.

"Do you chance to know where I can find Captain English?—who was to have gone out in command of the Asia?"

"Don't know anything about him. Captain English?—Let's see. Think I've heard his name. Think he's gone round to some port to take another command. Am not sure, sir, that that was the name."

And nothing more satisfactory could Prim get at. He next went to the liquidators who had Mr. Buckle's affairs in hand, and heard there would not be a shilling in the pound. Prim stood aghast.

"Captain English told me Mr. Buckle was a rich man," said he.

"Captain English should have known better," was the dry answer.

"But Mr. Buckle seemed to be so very prosperous—talked as though he was!"

"Ay: thought himself so, perhaps. When a man's speculations fail, he suddenly finds himself nowhere."

And so Richard Prim found he had had his journey for nothing, and went back home as he came.

Well, the long and the short of it is, that the Asia was a worthless old ship, tinkered up for her voyage; and that our lives, when we sailed in her, were not worth a month's purchase. But for that gale—which Heaven must have sent to save us—we should have been too far away from land to put back; and the leaking and heavily-laden ship would probably never have reached the Cape. Nothing of this was proved; nobody made any stir in the affair, and it died away without public exposure—but I affirm that it is true.

One person, interested in some of us who had sailed in the sinking ship, made it his business to institute inquiry privately. By dint of perseverance, he at length obtained an insight into the truth.

Mr. Buckle was a gentleman who for many years had contrived to keep his head above water in some mysterious way and to hold offices in the City. His business seemed to lie in "mines," and in the promotion of schemes. At length he hit upon a grand one: safe to make his fortune and that of all connected with it, especially his intimate friend Captain English. Perhaps the captain had a hand in the promotion. I don't say so. Mr. Buckle would become a shipowner. And this is how he set about it.

In our large seaports there is always a number of old and more or less worn-out ships. They are unseaworthy. No really respectable owner would send them to sea. They are laid up in some unfrequented corner of a dock, generally called "Rotten Row"—the name is

suggestive—awaiting a purchaser. Usually they are sold to be broken up. The proprietors are glad to let them go for what they'll fetch.

Mr. Buckle put himself in communication with various shipbrokers in and out of London. He soon had a goodly list of such ships for sale, with a description of each; and he proceeded to one of our chief outports to inspect the Asia, a large 1200 ton ship. She was inspected for him by a professional surveyor—fee two guineas. The result was that Mr. Buckle bought her cheaply, paid in bills at three and six months, and conveyed her round to Liverpool.

After running to and fro across the Atlantic for many years the Asia had been condemned. On her last passage from New York she encountered a succession of severe gales with very heavy seas. She was deeply laden, got strained all to pieces, and arrived at her destination leaking like a sieve. She was surveyed privately after discharging cargo, and unconditionally *condemned* as *worn out.*

The owners were Americans. On receipt of the news, they instructed their agent in England to dispose of her to the best advantage. She had been laid up eight months when Mr. Buckle heard of her. His was the first bid made, and the people were glad to come to terms. They had to take his bills in payment; but, on the other hand, they obtained a good price for the old hulk—*five hundred pounds.*

The purchase completed, Mr. Buckle, through the influence of a friend at court, chartered the ship to the Europe and India Steamship Company, to take out patent fuel to India—and at a high rate of charter. He was to receive two thousand five hundred pounds on account of freight *as soon as the ship sailed.* The next step was to insure the ship and the balance of the freight, due after delivery of the cargo abroad. None of the large public companies would be likely to have anything to do with such a ship. In the first place, she could not possibly pass their survey. A private concern was found to take the risk. On the policy of insurance Mr. Buckle then borrowed one thousand pounds. He next mortgaged the ship for fifteen hundred more.

Thus it will be seen that by the time the ship left Liverpool he had raised five thousand pounds in cash upon her and her prospective earnings. On the other hand, he had not expended a twentieth part of this sum. Even the purchase money was not payable until later.

It was a shameful swindle. The hearer of the facts sat aghast. "Oh, sir," said the relater, carelessly, "such things are done every day. And it is not one time in fifty that you can touch the owner."

"And what of the officers and men who sail in them?"

"Ah, poor fellows, it's unlucky for them! Many more brave officers and men, than the world knows of, forfeit their lives by being taken to sea in these rotten ships. We call them floating coffins."

H. W.

THE IMPERIAL VIOLET.

THERE are certain plants and flowers bearing an historical importance and interest, which have, on this account, gathered round themselves a store of anecdote and legend of a nature quite different from that which attaches to the majority of their race. Such, for example, is the broom, that planta genista which Geoffry of Anjou took as his crest, and which gave its name to a line of English kings; and the oak, which is still worn on the twenty-ninth of May, in memory of the Restoration. The Rose of England, the Shamrock of Ireland, the Thistle of Scotland, the Lilies of France, and the Oak-leaf of Austria, are sufficiently familiar; and there are other flower-badges of various countries which are almost as well established, although perhaps less generally known: as the Palmetto of Carolina, the Lotos of India, &c.

But for the most recent examples of the extensive adoption by a political party of a floral emblem, we must cross the Channel; and we shall find that not only has the Bourbon lily acquired a new prominence and popularity, but that the Republicans have adopted the fragrant wild thyme as their flower-badge, while the Imperialists have appropriated the violet. This selection was made by the first Napoleon, and zealously maintained by the adherents of his party.

At first sight it would appear that the imperious ruler of the destinies of Europe could hardly have chosen as an emblem a less suitable flower; for there seems to be but little in common between the despotic monarch and the blossom which has come to be regarded as a fitting emblem of humility. But it was at a period when reverses had come upon Napoleon that the violet was selected as his emblem. It was on leaving France for Elba that he said, "I shall return with the violets:" and this little sentence—a mere façon de parler, as it would seem—was sufficient for his friends and sympathizers. Violet ribbons and violet rings were worn publicly by the Bonapartists as a party distinction: while Napoleon himself was spoken of and toasted as Caporal, or Papa la Violette. "Aimez-vous la violette?" was the question by which a sympathizer might be known. A simple reply in the affirmative indicated that the responder was ignorant of the schemes for the restoration; while the answer, "Eh bien! elle reviendra au printemps," was the sign of a confederate. A favourite picture represented a small group of violets so arranged that in their outlines the profiles of Napoleon, Marie Louise, and the King of Rome could be traced by the initiated; or the profile of Napoleon alone was exhibited, with the

motto, "Il reviendra au printemps." Byron, in his poem, "Napoleon's Farewell to France," has the following allusion to the violet :

> "Farewell to thee, France !—but when liberty rallies,
> Once more in thy regions, remember me then ;
> The violet still grows in the depths of thy valleys,
> Though withered, thy tears will unfold it again."

Such being the significance attached to this little flower, we may imagine how it increased in favour when Napoleon, having escaped from Elba, entered the Tuileries, on the twentieth of March, 1815, when the violets had indeed returned, and were worn on all sides by his rejoicing friends. Naturally enough, the violet thenceforth continued the Napoleonic flower; and during the Bourbon ascendency it was dangerous to wear one in public, its old significance remaining in full force. When Bonaparte was finally conveyed to St. Helena, we are told that he gave a violet to an English naval officer who accompanied him—an intimation, it may be, of his hope (which was never realized) of a speedy return.

The revival, in greater force than ever, in connection with the late Emperor—as manifested at his funeral, and at the mausoleum at Chiselhurst, which is sometimes almost hidden by violets—is, no doubt, chiefly due to tradition. Its popularity, however, was probably enhanced by an incident which happened at the time of the late Emperor's escape from the fortress of Ham. A packet of violet plants having arrived by diligence, the keeper was directed by Dr. Conneau to plant them in pots, and, while his attention was thus occupied, the escape was effected. It is stated that the annual sale of violets in Paris exceeds 6,000,000 bunches, realising a sum of more than 577,000 francs.

As an emblem of constancy, the violet was esteemed in France from very early days, and this signification may, perhaps, have had something to do with its adoption by the expectant Bonapartists. It was the prize bestowed upon the troubadour in olden times, and was subsequently replaced by its representative in gold. A golden violet was the prize instituted by Clémence Isaure, at the floral games established at Toulouse, early in the fourteenth century, which have been kept up, with occasional interruptions, to the present day. Yet further back, Athens was noted for its love of violets; and the term, "Violet-crowned Athens," occurs more than once in classical authors. "In all seasons," says a modern author, "it was to be seen exposed for sale in the market-place at Athens, the citizens being successful in rearing it in their gardens even when the ground was covered with snow." The violet is not mentioned in the sacred Scriptures, but its odour is spoken of in the Koran as "excellent above all other odours : it is as warmth in winter, and coolness in midsummer."

Although always a favourite flower in England, there is very little in

the way of popular tradition connected with the violet. In some districts it is considered "unlucky" to bring two or three into the house at a time, it being supposed that the brood of chickens will be proportionately limited: a good handful must be taken in. Wilsford, in his "Nature's Secrets," published in 1665, says, "When violets flourish in autumn, it is an evil sign of an ensuing plague the year following, or some pestiferous disease." It would appear from Tennyson's line—

"Thick by ashen roots the violets grow"—

that it is supposed to flourish especially under the shadow of the ash, but this is doubtful. In Thuringia it is regarded as a protection against witchcraft; and in Silesia ague may be cured by chewing the first violet seen.

An American violet was mainly instrumental in causing John Bartram, an old Quaker botanist, of Pennsylvania, to take up the study of plants. Gathering it one day at random, he was so struck with its beauty that he resolved to learn more about its structure. He, therefore, studied Latin, until he had acquired sufficient for understanding botanical descriptions, and became one of the most eminent of the early American botanists.

JAMES BRITTEN.

LOST IN IMAGINATION.

I SIT me down in my quiet room,
The last of a household band;
The wild rose sheds a sweet perfume,
And the bats flit past in the gathering gloom
Like gnomes from another land.

Now sweetly falls on the list'ning ear
The ring of the evening bell;
Like music heard from some distant sphere,
Now almost hushed, now sounding clear,
In full harmonic swell.

The stars come forth from their homes above,
A bright and beautiful throng,
And gaze on me with their looks of love,
With power my inmost heart to move
With feelings deep and strong.

And I no longer am sitting there
The last of a household band;
But circled by loved ones, that round my chair
Press close and closer their forms of air,
As they throng from the spirit-land.

DR. SEYMOUR.

BY NARISSA ROSAVO, AUTHOR OF "POLLY."

DOCTOR SEYMOUR stood outside the post-office in the city of Bradford, and dropped a large square-shaped envelope into the letter-box. His hand trembled a little as he did so; and no wonder, for he had just posted a proposal of marriage to Miss Ellen Pemberton. He was a man of quick sympathies, and of almost too deep and ardent sensibility. Medicine is a wearing profession to such a temperament, and he looked older than his years. Dr. Seymour was not, however, very young. He was the last man in the world of whom any acquaintance would have prophesied that he would probably propose by letter, if he felt matrimonially inclined, in place of urging his cause by that eager persuasive speech of which he was master, or aiding it by the lever of his personal influence, which was strong with nearly all who knew him: for he was a universal favourite. But then, who ever does what is expected of him? He was a very modest man as regards self-estimation. And, perhaps, after all, he was swayed in this, as in most other matters, by his kind heart, which could ache a little even for the embarrassment of a child.

Dr. Seymour's patients received a somewhat divided attention that evening, as he afterwards confessed. Nevertheless, he conscientiously visited everyone who had the least right to expect him on this occasion; and, in consequence, returned home late and weary, and quite ready for his dinner, which had long been in readiness. But fresh work was awaiting him. Had it been possible for the lady to whom he had despatched his letter to have been forgotten, even for one instant, she would at once have been recalled to mind by the anxious face of a respectable elderly man who was on the look out for him at his house, and who eagerly welcomed his return.

"Miss Ellen thinks she's dying sir, I hope you'll come away, and no time lost. She were seized very bad, sudden like, this afternoon."

The Doctor passed his hand across his forehead. "The young lady?" he gasped, inquiringly.

"Our young lady, sir," the man replied, a little tartly.

"But which of them?"

"Miss Ellen, sir, of course. The one my wife and I has known all her life. *We* calls the other Miss Nellie."

The Doctor swallowed a little hot soup hastily, as an act of special favour to his housekeeper, while a fresh horse was being harnessed,

and then hurried away with the messenger. The distance the two had to go was not far. They soon reached a pretty suburban house, standing in its own grounds. A neat lodge kept guard inside the gate. This was the abode of Haynes, the man who had summoned the Doctor. He was steward, gardener, and care-taker in general of the little place; and also, as he considered, of its owners and mistresses. These were two maiden ladies—an aunt and niece. Although there was more than a dozen years between them, they might easily have passed for sisters, had it not been that their names were identically the same. Both were simply Ellen Pemberton; no more and no less: to their great mutual indignation. On either side sundry hints and recommendations were continually being thrown out that the other should adopt the title of Nell, or Nellie, which had been unconditionally forced upon the younger of the pair by the lodge-keeper, but neither would yield the point, being specially disinclined to the abbreviation.

"I was christened Ellen, and Ellen I will remain until you bury me; but you may call me Ellie, if you like," the elder lady had said, with a twinkle of fun in her eyes, the very morning of the day on which this story opens. She still wanted some years of being forty, but she was quite plump and fair enough for that age. A downright pretty woman, with a face for ever brimming over with laughter and mischief. She could boast far more regular attractions than her niece, who was yet a dreamy, sweet, soft little thing of beauty, with a graceful, well-shaped head and small white hands.

"My hair certainly is a little thin," continued Miss Ellen Pemberton, "but I really don't think those six grey intruders show much. I don't care about pulling them out. It seems mean. What is your opinion —Nellie?" The speaker was standing on tiptoe before the chimney-glass.

"It shall be Nellie, if I may call you Aunt Ellen. Now, that is a fair bargain. Shall it be so? Otherwise I will never give in. I like Ellie best too."

The originator of this last rather malicious little speech was caressing a silky cat while she spoke. Pussy was enthroned on her shoulder. The two were inseparables within doors, and were rarely seen apart. The elder lady made a wry face at her niece.

"Can't you call me grandmother at once, you cross old thing?"

And then the two sat down to breakfast, with Pussy sitting by to help. Before the meal was half over, a bachelor cousin dropped in. He was a familiar attaché to the house, and the escort of the ladies whenever they needed his services in that capacity. The proposal of marriage, now on its way to the abode, had been hurried on by a sudden burst of jealousy awakened in the breast of Dr. Seymour by his having, on several late occasions, met the three together about town in very merry and confidential intercourse. Cousin Jim was in a very unusually

self-absorbed mood this morning, however. He was so pre-occupied with his own thoughts that he actually kissed his two relatives without leave, an honour only accorded him, as a rule, once a year; and then under protest, and with a view to accidents, as the elder lady remarked; invariably before his annual purchase of that long white cane called an alpenstock, which so many persons find rather an encumbrance than an aid to them in touring about Switzerland. Having got through with his salutations, Jim sat down and twirled his soft hat between his fingers, and meditated. "When do you start?" inquired his eldest cousin.

"I—eh!—start—where? Oh, I'm not going to any place, just for a while at least."

"Then what right had you to kiss us, pray?"

"Kiss you! I?—what! did I though? Well, I suppose a fellow might do worse with his time. I daresay there are chaps who would envy me the privilege."

"But you haven't the privilege, sir," cried one.

"And he never even knew he had done it!" exclaimed the other.

"I declare I should not be surprised to hear you had matrimony in your mind," the elder lady continued, sagaciously.

"Women are always thinking of that, so they put it down upon the wiser sex that they do the same," Jim said, absently, but he blushed in a most unbecoming manner. He began some other speech, but his thoughts appeared to be too mighty for him. He rose, offered two more salutes, which were declined with dignity, made his bow, and departed.

"If I did not *know* we were both cut out for a pair of old maids, I should say Jim Compton wanted to marry one of us," Miss Pemberton said, as the door closed upon him.

"I don't think it would be of much use for him to wish for either of us," her niece replied composedly, emptying the cream ewer into a saucer for Pussy.

It was on the afternoon of this same day that the elder of the two ladies was attacked by sudden and serious illness.

Doctor Seymour found the house upset by alarm and great anxiety. Miss Nellie, as the gatekeeper called her, was sobbing as if her heart would break with grief for her aunt's sufferings, and from angry provocation at being shut completely out of the sick-room by Miss Pemberton's maid, who assumed as much authority within doors as the man-servant did without. The Doctor came away from his patient with a very serious face. Ellen was lying in wait for him. He was a very old friend. He told her he was very uneasy about her aunt. If she were not better in the morning, he should bring a second physician. His listener's tears fell faster than ever. They went to his heart as much as if they had been caused by some ache he could remedy. He

longed to linger and try to stop their course, but he was forced by stern necessity to hasten back to town, in order to send the needed remedies. Haynes went with him.

There was more than medicine upon the Doctor's mind that night. He was deeply provoked with himself for having sent his proposal of marriage to-day. He felt fully persuaded that his suit was now certain of rejection, as it would arrive at so untoward a time. He was tired out and hungry, and much depressed altogether. "What sort of a life has a man in my position to offer any woman? I feel too, now, that I have never even prepared my way here. And I have the ill-luck and presumption to step forward, unexpectedly, at such a hopelessly unsuitable time. I throw away every chance by this abruptness."

This was his train of thought as he drove back to town.

"Haynes, do you know my handwriting well?" he inquired, suddenly, letting the reins fall on his horse's neck as he spoke.

The man thus appealed to gave a rather indignant little snort. "In course I do, sir," he replied, quickly.

"I am in a great difficulty," the Doctor went on. "I this evening posted a letter on business to your ladies' house. It was directed to Miss—Ellen Pemberton. Now, with all this sickness and anxiety there, I would give much to recall it for a few days. Could you help me in the matter, and can I trust you to keep the thing close?"

Haynes considered for some moments before he answered. "I doesn't much like keeping back or meddling with none of their things," he said, slowly; "but—well, sure, if a man has a right to anything, 'tis to his own letter. 'Tis hard if he mightn't have it, and no doubt 'twould be a bad job to bother Miss Ellen with business now. You has done many a good turn for me an' my wife, sir; I'll do this for you. All the letters for the house go into the box at the gate, and I unlocks it, and takes 'em up. 'Tis easy enough done anyways."

"My note is in a large white square envelope."

"All right! You shall have it, sir."

The Doctor gratefully received and pocketed his missive next morning at the gate, when he threw the reins to Haynes. He rarely took his horse and trap to the house here. Merry voices reached his ears from the sick-room as he ascended the stairs. "Is it a resurrection?" he inquired, with a smile of surprise, as he passed the threshold of the chamber. It really seemed to be something of the sort. Either he had overrated the seriousness of last night's symptoms, or Miss Pemberton had made a most marvellous stride towards recovery. A good sleep had done wonders for her. The two ladies had their heads together over some letter, and were in eager consultation concerning it. The Doctor almost wished it had been his now.

"I begin to think it was all a false alarm, Dr. Seymour," his patient said, jestingly. "I feel nearly myself again. At any rate, you need

not order the hatbands just yet. It is really a case of Mother Hubbard and her pet. 'She went to the joiner to get him a coffin, but when she came back, why, the dog was a-laughing'!"

Miss Pemberton had taken out a new lease of fun as well as of life.

Her niece slipped out of the room when the Doctor came in, her face rosy with blushes. She went downstairs to await his descent, but to her great discomfiture she found that Cousin Jim had just arrived, and was full of anxious inquiries concerning the invalid's condition. He only stayed, however, until Dr. Seymour made his appearance; but when the latter recognized who it was that Ellen had just bidden farewell to, his spirits sank to zero. He scarcely lingered for a moment before he too took his departure. Ellen's face was crimson now. Even her little white ears were blushing. She could hardly find voice to put a timid question or two about her aunt. The Doctor answered with something like impatient abruptness, and turned away after a cold and most commonplace leave-taking.

There was a look of wounded pride in the girl's face as he thus left her. She bent forward her graceful head, and gazed after his retreating figure with a glance of mingled amazement and grief. Hot tears filled and dimmed her soft eyes, and she pressed her hand hastily to her heart. Something nestled there underneath her dress. Pussy came to her, purring and clawing, but she set her down very decidedly upon the rug, and went away to her own room.

The Doctor, on his part, hurried home as soon as he could. The letter he had received back burned his pocket. Nevertheless, he felt very thankful that it was in his own possession, rather than in another's. He drew it forth angrily, when he was safe within his private room, and, without so much as bestowing a glance upon it, he pushed the offending envelope behind a little miniature upon his chimney-piece. If a fire had been burning upon the hearth at the moment, it would soon have been consumed within its flames. He had promised Miss Pemberton that he would call in again that evening to see her, as he would be passing by her gate. He was sorry now for having thus pledged himself. She was better, and there was no real necessity for his doing so.

Now that Miss Pemberton was in a convalescent condition, her maid no longer forbade those whom she called "outsiders" to visit her mistress's room. Indeed, on the following day, she even requested Nellie to sit with her lady during the servants' dinner hour. The invalid was asleep, really at first, fictitiously later. Her niece had a book in her hand, but a voice from the bed suddenly exclaimed, in kind persuasive tones, "Nellie, my dear, why are you crying?"

"I am not crying," was the very hasty reply made to the appeal. Only a single tear had fallen, so the speaker felt herself righteously justified in her assertion.

"Oh! Then the slater should come and mend the house; the rain must be coming through the roof, and right down."

"You *know* it is a fine day, with a lovely sun shining," the tormented girl said, bursting into a little odd, choked laugh, but a small shower of drops fell now upon her dress.

"I am glad to hear it; I want to get up presently. But what *is* the matter, Nellie? Has Jim been kissing you again without leave?"

"I may as well tell you now, Ellen. I have been wanting to do so all along. I must have your opinion and advice."

"Tell away, my dear. I do love giving advice when the receiver doesn't want me to take any." Miss Pemberton sat up. She was quite hot and eager for a little excitement.

"I got this letter by the post yesterday," her niece said, tearfully. "See, isn't it quite plain and clear? and yet—and yet—he has been here three times since, but avoids me. He never looks at me, I think. He doesn't seem in the least to want or expect any answer."

Miss Pemberton read the letter through, and examined it carefully. "Have you answered it?" she asked at last.

"I would sooner die than do so now?" was the hot reply.

The two consulted long and anxiously upon this very mysterious matter. The result of their confidences was not enlivening. "I'm sure, my dear, it would be a fair mercy if either of us broke the spell and went in for marriage. We are such determined old maids. I don't know what will become of us, unless one sets the other a good example soon. Nevertheless, I must now tell you my mind plainly. It is my firm belief that the Doctor never wrote this letter. You may be sure the whole thing is a hoax of Cousin Jim's. I told you he was up to some kind of mischief the other day. I saw him observing the Doctor and you that last day the two dined here together."

"But the handwriting?"

"Pshaw! That goes for nothing. A man with no great brains for anything in particular can nearly invariably do just whatever he likes with his hands. Jim always was great at letter-writing, since the first day I knew him, and that is a long time ago. No doubt he can copy anyone else's hand just as well as Dr. Seymour's. Besides, for the matter of that, writing is by no means such a very decisive affair as some people think. I could almost as well as not swear in a court that this envelope had been directed, for instance, by—Ah! well, it is of no use bringing up old stories. I have had my day, I suppose. What a fool one is, to be sure, when one is a girl like you! Not that I am so very ancient now, of course, but still—after all, it was very nice to have had so much in one's hand, even though it was all thrown away. Heigh-ho! Certainly the writing is curiously like. That makes me all the more sure Jim is at the bottom of the business. Geoffrey was his cousin, although he was no relation of mine. The same blood

is in their veins. Do look, Ellen, and see whether this attack has brought any more grey hairs."

"Oh, no!" Ellen replied, absently, after a very cursory examination into this interesting subject. There was a little less depression to be observed now in her tones, but her face was flushed and indignant. "And what are we to do to punish this abominable Jim?" she asked.

"Cut him, of course," was the prompt reply. "When next he calls, bid Mary say we are not at home to him; and tell the servants to manage so that while the door is open he may be sure to overhear one of them saying something which will let him perfectly understand that we are all the time within, and disengaged."

The result of these very active proceedings came, in a couple of days, in the form of a letter addressed to "The Misses Pemberton." It ran as follows:

"My dear Cousins,—I cannot conceive how you have discovered my secret. I thought it was entirely in my own keeping, so far as you were concerned, to be divulged at my leisure and pleasure. I would not have kept it from you much longer. Needless tantalisation is not my forte, neither was it ever my desire to excite false expectations and hopes. I am very sorry that I should have misled either of my fair relatives concerning my intentions. I always endeavoured so to divide my attentions impartially between the two that neither could believe I thought seriously of her. It is very unfortunate that I have not been successful in this, especially as my affections have long been otherwise engaged. By-and-by, when the first sharpness of this disappointment shall, in a measure, have passed away, I trust we may once more meet as friends, and re-establish our old intimacy on terms suitable to our altered circumstances. Till then, I remain,

"Your affectionate cousin,

"James Compton."

The two Ellens read this with their heads together. The elder lady almost laughed herself into a fresh attack of illness. She was fairly convulsed with merriment, leaving most of the indignation proper to the occasion to be transacted by her niece. "Surely he has revenged himself on us," she exclaimed, at last. "But what on earth does he mean by his affections being elsewhere engaged, and so forth? Oh, Jim! you will be the death of me! Ellen, the mystery thickens. I don't now believe he ever wrote that forgery, if it is one. Has the Doctor spoken since? No! Well, here goes for another move in the game! You and I must answer this precious epistle of Jim's. See, this will do, I think. 'The Misses Pemberton present their compliments to Mr. Compton. They denied themselves to him on the occasion of his last visit, in consequence of their then existing belief that he had been the

author of a vulgar practical joke played off upon the house. If he is innocent of this, and can prove that his "secret" had no reference to the before-mentioned trick, the Misses Pemberton will be happy to renew their acquaintance with Mr. Compton!'"

This note was in due course despatched by post.

Next evening Dr. Seymour came to see his patient, who was now almost out of his hands. Miss Pemberton was sitting by the fire downstairs. Her niece did not make her appearance at all upon this occasion. Dr. Seymour was much depressed. He held his companion's hand long in his, and looked anxiously into her face. She coloured violently, and turned her eyes away.

"Don't you think I am very nearly well again now?" she asked, somewhat abruptly.

"I do. I will come next week and see how you get on. After that, I don't expect you will need me."

He sighed heavily. His questioner felt embarrassed, and was glad when the interview came to an end.

The other Ellen was in her own room. She stood at the window, and watched until she saw the visitor leave the house, and then, after some little time, she went downstairs. Pussy was purring in a comforting manner in her arms. Miss Pemberton was sitting in a lounge near the fire. Her niece took possession of a low rocking-chair, and swayed herself gently to and fro. Presently, the elder lady broke into a little laugh, but it was a nervous and uncomfortable kind of affair. "Have you that letter by you still, Ellen?" she inquired.

Her companion nodded.

"Would you mind letting me look at it again?"

"Oh, not in the least. The whole world may see it so far as I am concerned. I don't care if you nail it up on the hall door. He might read it over then for himself, when he next calls. I think that would be a very good plan."

The feminine orator made her little speech with very unusual sharpness in her tones. Pussy did not understand or approve of this unpleasant excitability, and she attempted to escape, but her mistress closely imprisoned the would-be deserter, within her arms. "Ah, Pussy, please stay with me. Don't you go away too," she murmured, laying her cheek against the cat's soft fur; and Pussy stayed. The aunt looked on with an air of provocation. "Do give up petting that animal, child," she exclaimed, almost angrily. "It is no wonder you are going to be an old maid, when you never, by any chance, put her out of your arms. Have you forgotten that I asked you to lend me that letter again?"

Ellen drew the required article from her pocket. (It had been dethroned from its first resting-place.) She handed it over with studied carelessness of manner.

"Perhaps, after all, you ought to have written an answer to this," Miss Pemberton said, poking up the fire, and bending forward to catch the light of a sudden blaze; for the two were sitting in the gloaming.

Ellen looked up, hot and indignant. "He wants no reply," she returned. "He cares nothing for me now, and I—I—of course I don't want to have anything to do with him."

Her companion turned the letter over and over in her hands. There was an odd, embarrassed look again upon her face. "I have a thought which might possibly explain this mystery, only I don't like to tell it to you," she observed, hesitatingly.

"Say whatever you think," whispered her niece out of the depths of Pussy's consoling fur.

"Well—I—could it be possible that this extraordinary affair was after all really intended for me?"

"But the direction?" These three words came out with a gasp.

"Why, child, how often our letters get muddled together. You know they do. Nearly every advertisement, for instance, comes to you, and yet, no doubt, at least half of such things are intended for me. The Haynes is often with the Doctor. He talks to him by the yard of old times, when my father and elder sister were alive, and before Geoffrey—I mean Colonel Clive—went away to India. He always speaks of me as Miss Ellen, and will persist in doing so. The Doctor may have had this in his mind. He may be wholly unaware of having put anything but Miss Pemberton on the envelope. I have noticed that he is in some ways an absent man. A person in love, too, would put the Christian name down almost unconsciously of the girl—bah! I mean of the woman he cares for."

"Ellen is my name too," sobbed the other occupant of the room half piteously, half appealingly. "If—if it was you he meant, why has he never said one word to you about the letter in all these days when he has been here so often?"

"He—well, you see, dear, it seems as if the great goose fancied I had been very ill indeed. He may have avoided all discussion about the matter, lest excitement of any sort should prove injurious to my recovery. He will probably have the affair out next week, when he comes again if things are at all as I have been surmising. To tell the truth, it was his manner this afternoon that put all this into my head."

"And do you care for him? Will you ——"

The elder lady cleared her throat, and then again poked the fire vigorously. "I ——"

A sudden loud summons at the hall door disturbed the conference. Miss Pemberton sat stiffly up in her chair and listened. Pussy leaped on the floor, and was not hindered in so doing. Her mistress fled away to her own room, hot and angry with herself and with all the world,

nd yet unable to make her indignation quell a great pain which was ıching at her heart.

Meanwhile, Mary, with a surprised face, ushered Doctor Seymour n to her mistress for the second time that day. She lit up the gas, ınd then left the two alone. The visitor was excited, and much flurried. "You will never forgive me," he said, breathlessly. "I can certainly ıever pardon myself for what I have done. Here is a letter which is, I suppose, intended for you. I have read it through, almost without knowing what I did. It has been lying in my room for several days ɔast. Pray see if it is of importance to you before I explain.

Of importance! The first sentence made her gasp for breath, and ook up at her companion with a wild, startled gaze.

"DEAREST ELLEN,—I have just returned home after my twelve long ɣears of exile. I have learned that you are still unmarried, but that s all my informant can tell me of you. I am of the same mind as of ɔld. May I come and see you again? Do not say yes, unless you ɜan let things be once more upon their past happy footing between us. Let us meet as engaged, if we meet at all. I will wait here ten days ör your answer: this will give you time for consideration. As ever,

"Yours,

"GEOFFREY CLIVE."

As Miss Pemberton read, tears streamed down her face, and at last he pressed the letter to her lips, heedless and forgetful of a bystander's ɔresence.

"You should have got this long since," Doctor Seymour said, hesiatingly. His companion started as if awakening suddenly out of a ıream. Her cheeks became carmine colour.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "I thought I was alone. Ten days! and t is a full week now since this was written. I must go and answer his old friend's letter at once. I hope you will excuse me, Doctor ɨeymour." She stood up, trembling with excitement. As she did so, ıer companion's unfortunate epistle fell from her lap to the floor. He ɔicked it up, and in so doing recognized it as that which had once ɔeen his property, but which had ceased so to be on leaving his ɔossession, and which he certainly had had no right whatever to attempt ɔ recall. He now stood silently with it in his hand, like a man in a ıaze. Miss Pemberton looked at him, and remembered all their ɔystification concerning this letter, and his subsequent behaviour. he saw there was something which needed telling, and she forced erself, by a strong effort of will, to put her own affairs aside for a ɣhile, and attend to the matter in hand. "That letter from you came ɔme time back?" she remarked, in an inquiring tone. The Doctor ɔoked at his companion with a distracted and anxious expression ı his face.

"And what did she think of my presumption? What must she hav thought of *me*, for avoiding her, as I have done, all this week, an for never looking or asking for an answer? But everything is in confusion. I did not know this letter had reached her, and I full believed she was either wholly or half engaged to her cousin."

"You never were more mistaken in your life," Miss Pemberton said laughing heartily as she thought of Jim again.

By degrees the whole story came out. The Doctor had returne home at once on leaving the house in the afternoon. He had taken ou and opened the letter Haynes had given him, intending to destroy it and had thus discovered that a mistake had been made. As the gate keeper afterwards confessed, he had been puzzled between the tw envelopes, which on being compared were certainly found to be ver much alike; but when the Doctor received the letter handed to him a his own, and pocketed it as such, the man naturally thought there could certainly be no cause for uneasiness in the matter, and he sai nothing.

"What am I to do now?" Doctor Seymour asked at last, in a helpless, despairing tone.

Miss Pemberton laughed. "I will send Ellen down to give you he answer," she replied. "I really must go upstairs now, and write m letter."

When her epistle was finished, and sent off to the post, she returned to the sitting-room. The Doctor was still there. Ellen was again in possession of her rocking-chair, and Pussy was happy on her lap. The scene was a very peaceful one, and the new-comer saw at once that the much talked-of proposal had now been properly urged in the right quarter, and had been accepted. "How could I ever have imagined we were going to be a pair of cross old maids?" she mentally ejaculated; but she was outwardly very proper and sobe over the affair, and offered her congratulations with due solemnity. It was quite impossible not to feel just a little hungry, however, so she asked the Doctor to stay and have dinner with them, as it was ready, or nearly so. This invitation, and a subsequent one—that he would at least return to tea—had nevertheless to be refused, as he suddenly remembered that there were at least fifteen patients to be seen before midnight.

Perhaps it was, after all, as well that he could not spend the evening at the house, as the second post arrived just then, and with it came a note from James Compton, who very humbly and properly expressed much gratitude for being forgiven for not having done something of which he was wholly ignorant. If permitted, he would come to tea, and bring his secret in his pocket. He then hoped to hear the whole history of the practical joke. He professed great admiration of the feminine mind and genius, but he was sorry to be obliged to state

that in this case he thought these powers had led his fair relatives astray, in making them conceive that even the superior abilities of a man were equal to the talk of disproving connection with the unknown.

The ladies pocketed some of their just indignation against the offender, and greeted him with civil dignity for the sake of his secret, which was in due course produced in the shape of a wedding-ring, having the name of the future wearer engraved within its rim. "This is quite a conclave of family secrets," Miss Pemberton remarked, with blushing pomposity. "We have two to communicate also, being both engaged to be married, as well as you; but as the gentlemen are not by, our mysteries cannot be revealed so gracefully as your story has been."

"I have told mine with a whoop," Jim observed, with assumed innocence. The outrageousness of this pun did much to reinstate him in his cousins' good graces, and they both gave him their warmest congratulations. After awhile, quits were cried on both sides, although Jim stood out long and valiantly, but vainly, for the history of the practical joke. It was never told him.

The two ladies were married to their respective husbands on the same day, and have lived happily ever since.

SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI.

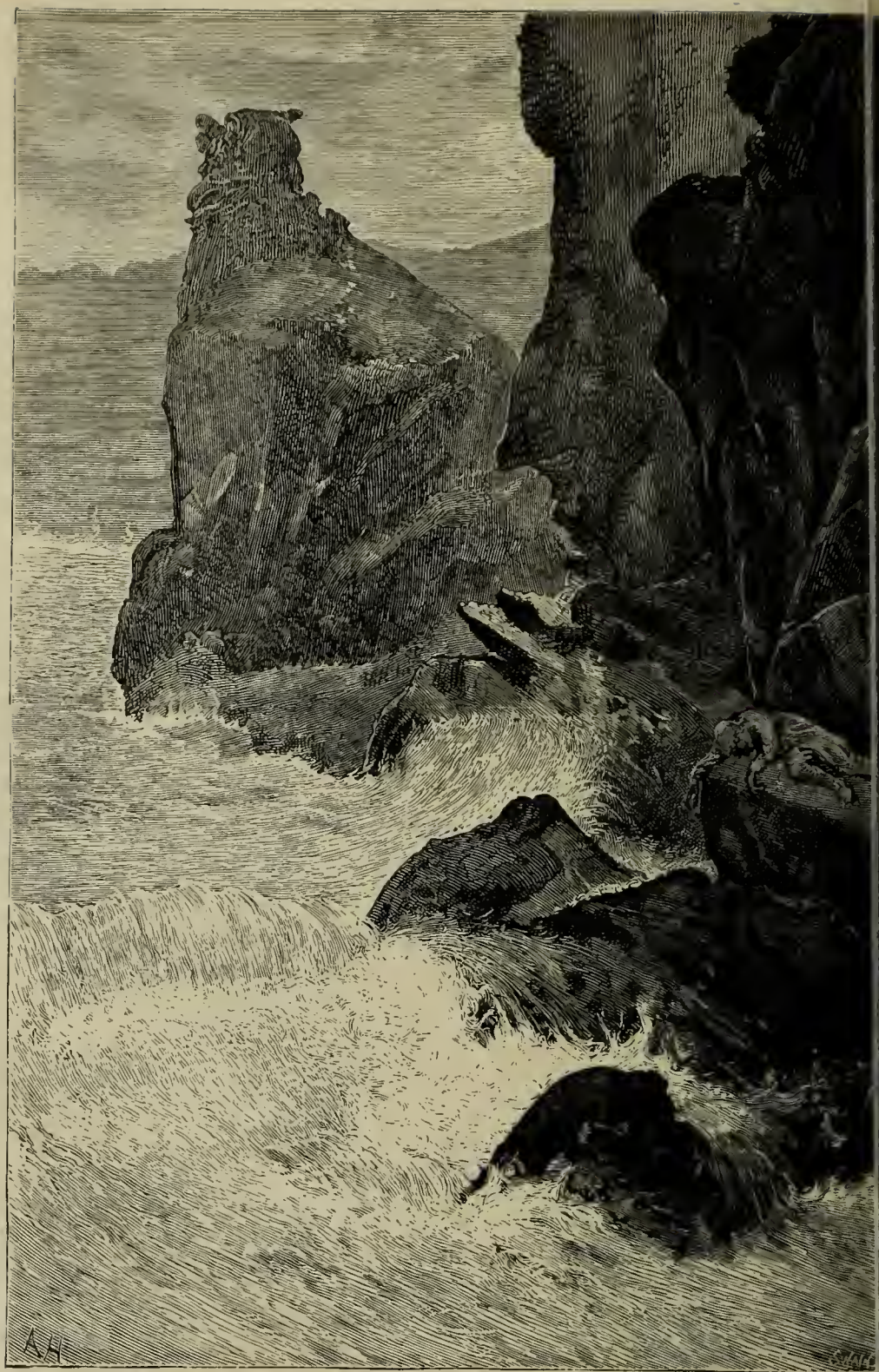
AND now sweet summer dies ;
Ah me ! to think of all the golden hours
We passed, when first to life she sprung,
And strewed our pathway with her choicest flowers
And lulled us with the magic of her tongue
That whispered in the breeze ; or louder sung
As Philomel, till every fibre swung
In rapturous pleasure known but to the young.
Such happy past rememb'ring, who but sighs
For summer, vanishing. Too soon she dies.

But some say, Wherefore weep ?
Summer returns.—True, but not this, not this ;
Granted, the earth may wake again
To life and beauty, 'neath the ardent kiss
Of yet another, which shall doubtless reign,
Lavish of fruits, and flowers, and blessed grain,
Now nurtured with her smile, now with her rain ;
But for *this* summer we shall grieve in vain.
Once dead for ever dead ; the days of yore,
To hearts that ache with longing, come no more.

No skies will be so bright ;
At least to us, who gazed on those of June ;
Beheld the West with light aflame ;
Then waited for the rising of the moon,
That later like a saintly spirit came.
No fairer morns the glowing East will claim,
Nor rouse the lark to spread Aurora's fame ;
What future summer days can be the same?
Of all that wait our mortal path to cheer,
What equal to the past, what half so dear?

And therefore do we mourn
Out of our life the sweetest chapter done ;
The very fairest page gone by.
There could not be a happier one
Tho' we are aged ere we come to lie
In Death's embraces ; be he far or nigh,
We always must remember, you and I,
These halcyon days departed, brief as bright—
This summer which is dying as I write.

S. E. G.



A HOPKINS. J SWA

ALONE ON THE ROCKS.

THE ARGOSY.

NOVEMBER, 1875.

A SECRET OF THE SEA.

By T. W. SPEIGHT,

Author of "In the Dead of Night," "Under Lock and Key," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE MESSAGE TO STAMMARS.

IT was on the forenoon of a certain Saturday in May that Olive Deane found herself jogging slowly along the road that leads from Pembridge to Stammars. The morning was sunny and the road pleasant, but Olive had no eyes for anything: her own tortuous thoughts occupied her fully. Should she break as gently as possible the news she had to tell, and then give Eleanor the letter after having thus paved the way? Should she put the letter into her hand without a word, and simply wait to be questioned as to anything further that she might be supposed to know? Or—and this was the course that approved itself more fully to her—should she say nothing about the letter, but tell the news her own way, with sting and venom, and before whatever audience chance might give her an opportunity of assembling to hear it? Over and over in her mind she kept revolving these different courses, as the ramshackle old fly in which she was seated jolted and creaked its way slowly along the quiet country roads.

Lady Dudgeon, released at length from further attendance on her sick sister, was panting to get back to London for the remainder of the season. Sir Thomas, accompanied by his faithful Gerald, had come down on the Friday to fetch her ladyship. They were to stay at Stammars over the week end, but on the Monday morning the whole family would go up to town.

In due course, Miss Deane arrived at Stammars, only to find that Lady Dudgeon, accompanied by Miss Lloyd, had gone shopping to

Pembridge, and that she must have passed them somewhere on the road. They would, however, so she was assured, be back in time for luncheon, so she made up her mind to await their return. Sir Thomas and Mr. Pomeroy were somewhere about, so the servant told her; but them, at present, she did not want to see. The young ladies, Sophy and Carry, had gone with their mamma, so that Miss Deane was left perforce to the evil company of her own thoughts. "Miss Lloyd, indeed!" muttered Olive, when the servant had left the room. "This is the last day that she will have a right to call herself by that name. What will her name be to-morrow? Should her ladyship have occasion to go shopping to-morrow, will she take this nameless pauper with her in her carriage? Not if Lady Dudgeon is the woman I take her to be."

After all, she had not long to wait—but little over an hour—before she saw the Dudgeon equipage rolling solemnly up the main avenue of the park. The young ladies had evidently been left behind, probably at some friend's house—a fact for which, just then, Olive was by no means sorry.

She was still undecided as to the precise mode in which her communication should be made to Eleanor. She found it impossible to make up her mind. Circumstances at the last moment would probably decide her.

From the place where she was standing she could see the entire length of the avenue. She could see the two fat greys and the fat coachman, as they came nearer with every moment, but not yet could she see who was in the carriage behind—the carriage respecting which her ladyship had spoken in such disparaging terms to her husband, but which was still deemed good enough for country wear. Presently she saw Sir Thomas and Mr. Pomeroy emerge from the shrubbery and go to meet the carriage. Then the carriage stopped, and Lady Dudgeon and Miss Lloyd alighted, and all four walked slowly towards the house. Gerald and Eleanor lingered a little behind the baronet and his wife, and to Olive's jaundiced eyes they seemed to be deep in earnest and loving conversation. In fancy she heard Pomeroy's low and tender tones and Eleanor's half-breathed replies. She set her teeth, and her lips tightened as she looked. "Before they are two hours older," she murmured under her breath, "he shall know that she is a beggar, and she shall know that her hero is nothing better than a vulgar adventurer!" And in the heat of her passion she took Matthew Kelvin's letter out of her pocket and tore it in two. "What has to be told I will tell in my own way. I have been a fool to hesitate so long."

But Olive was altogether mistaken in imagining that Pomeroy and Miss Lloyd were whispering love's sweet nothings to each other as they walked across the park. Gerald was merely giving, in animated terms, a description of the last new opera, which he had been to see a few nights previously. Eleanor hungered, but hungered in vain, for

one tone of affection, for one whispered word of love. He knew that she was going away—going to leave Stammars, probably for ever—and yet he made no sign. She had long ago forgiven the deception that he had practised on her; he could hardly help seeing that she had forgiven him; and yet he still maintained the reserved and impassive demeanour that had marked him from the day of his confession in the library. Perhaps, after all, his love for her had been nothing more than a passing fancy. If such were indeed the case, if he felt that he had been mistaken, if his affection for her was not of a texture sufficiently strong to stand the wear and tear of a lifetime, then he wa right to draw back while there was yet time to do so. His doing so proved one thing: that although, in the first instance, he had sought her for her wealth, and although his confession had led her to believe that he now loved her purely for herself, yet when he discovered that he had over-rated the strength of his feelings, he had retired honourably from the field, instead of staying to win her, as he might so easily have done, and with her that money which had first tempted him to follow her. To know this was only a poor sort of consolation, but it was better than none. How strange it seemed to her that she should have given her heart away to this man, given it beyond all power of recall, and yet that he should have nothing to give her in return! Was the romance of her life to have this poor and ignoble ending? It seemed so, indeed, just now. She only knew that, despite all the arguments urged by her pride, her love was still his as thoroughly as it ever had been. He was chatting to her now, as they walked up the avenue together, as any ordinary acquaintance might have done, of the new opera and the new prima donna, and yet how happy she felt to be walking by his side, how she had thrilled from head to foot when she first caught sight of him standing there with Sir Thomas! Yes, whether he loved her, or whether he hated her—her heart was still his beyond all possibility of recovery.

If Eleanor had but known how much it cost Gerald to maintain this cold and reserved demeanour towards her! If she had but known how he longed to clasp her to his heart, and whisper in her ear how fondly he loved her! He often felt that not much longer would his tongue keep silence; that some moment, perhaps when he himself least intended it, the pent-up words would burst from his lips, his arms would stretch themselves forth and draw her to him, and in a few brief moments everything would be told. The task he had imposed on himself was fast becoming unbearable—would have become altogether unbearable, but that happily there seemed at last a prospect of its coming to a speedy end. He had had a letter from Marhyddoc, in which Ambrose Murray held out strong hopes of his search being brought to a successful issue. Should such really prove to be the case, then would Murray's first task be, with the proofs of his innocence in

his hands, to seek the daughter whom he had hitherto refused to claim. Then would the necessity for this odious concealment come to an end; then would everything be told to Eleanor. Therefore did Gerald schoo himself to keep silence for a little while longer, hoping and believing that the future would compensate for everything.

Miss Deane's eager eyes watched the party of four come slowly up the avenue, and saw them at length ascend the steps and enter the house. Inside the hall Sir Thomas and Pomeroy went off together to the library, while Eleanor accompanied Lady Dudgeon to her sitting-room. Five minutes later a servant came to tell Olive that her ladyship would see her. The moment so intensely longed for had come at last. Olive's pale face grew a shade paler as she followed the servant along the passage.

Lady Dudgeon was seated at her davenport as usual. Miss Lloyd was sitting close by, finishing a sketch in water-colours. "Good morning, Miss Deane; I am pleased to see you. I hope Mr. Kelvin is no worse," said her ladyship, offering Olive two rigid fingers.

"Mr. Kelvin is no worse, madam, than he has been all along. He is still very ill—too ill to leave his room; and having something of importance to communicate, and being still too weak to write down the particulars, he has deputed me to come in his stead."

"Something of importance to communicate to me or to Sir Thomas?" asked her ladyship. Eleanor rose and was about to leave the room.

"My errand is to Miss Lloyd. It concerns her more nearly than anyone else."

"Eleanor, my love, had you not better take Miss Deane to your own room?"

Eleanor flushed a little. In her heart she had never liked Olive. She had always had a vague distrust and dread of her. How such a feeling had originated she could not have told: none the less it was there. "I have no secrets from you, Lady Dudgeon," said Eleanor. "Whatever Miss Deane may have to communicate can just as well be told here as elsewhere."

"Are you sure that you would not prefer to see her alone?"

"Quite sure."

"Then Miss Deane may as well be seated." And her ladyship dipped her pen in her inkstand, and made believe that she was about to go on with her correspondence.

Miss Deane drew a chair quietly forward and sat down. Eleanor, looking distrustfully at her, caught a momentary glance out of her black eyes, so full of malignant triumph that her heart sank within her, and a presage of coming misfortune chilled her suddenly from head to foot.

"When Mr. Jacob Lloyd died," began Olive, in a low voice, ignoring

Eleanor, and addressing her remarks direct to Lady Dudgeon, "he left behind him a large quantity of miscellaneous papers. Those papers were taken possession of by my cousin, Mr. Kelvin, whose intention it was to go through them, arrange them, and indorse them at his leisure. This process was interrupted by his sudden illness. During the last few days, however, feeling somewhat stronger, he has endeavoured to occupy himself with them for an hour or two now and then. Yesterday he came across a document in Mr. Lloyd's own writing of a very singular nature indeed."

She paused for a moment as if to gather breath. Then she went on, speaking more slowly and deliberately than before, so that each word might go home to her hearers, and with her eyes still fixed on Lady Dudgeon. "It is a document which would seem to prove conclusively that the young lady hitherto known as Miss Eleanor Lloyd was not the daughter of the late Mr. Jacob Lloyd—nor indeed any relative of his whatever, but simply the child of some unknown parents, adopted by Mr. Lloyd and his wife out of charity or compassion."

Eleanor's face by this time was whiter than Olive's. She did not speak, but sat staring with wide-open eyes, "as in a picture," and with one hand grasping the back of a chair, as if to keep herself from falling.

"Good gracious me! whatever is the woman talking about?" cried her ladyship, taking off her double eyeglass, as if to make sure that it was really Olive Deane who was sitting there.

"Mr. Lloyd, as your ladyship may remember," resumed Olive, without heeding the interruption, "died very suddenly, and without making a will. This young lady"—indicating Eleanor by a slight inclination of the head—"has, consequently, no claim whatever to a single sixpence of Mr. Lloyd's property. She is, in fact, neither more nor less than a pauper."

At this word a little cry burst involuntarily from Eleanor. She ran to Lady Dudgeon, and sinking on one knee, buried her face in the elder lady's lap.

"Miss Deane, you forget yourself!" said Lady Dudgeon, with severity. "You forget that Miss Lloyd is my guest."

"I ask your ladyship's pardon if I have committed any offence. I was but making a simple statement of fact."

"That has yet to be proved. But, in any case, the statement was a most offensive one." Then she patted Eleanor's cheek affectionately. "Keep up your spirits, my dear. Don't get downhearted. Miss Deane's strange statements have yet to be proved in a court of law."

"I believe your ladyship is sufficiently acquainted with Mr. Kelvin," said Olive, not without a touch of sternness, "to be quite aware that he is not a man who would be likely to send me to Stammars on such

an errand as this unless he were perfectly sure of the facts he had to go upon. Had there been any doubt in the matter, I should not have been here to-day."

"Oh, Lady Dudgeon, it is not that I fear poverty!" cried Eleanor. "Don't think that. You know that I have never really valued the riches that were said to be mine."

"That's true enough," murmured her ladyship.

"It is the thought of having lost the dearest and kindest man that ever breathed that wrings my heart. I have lost—my father!"

"Hush, my dear—hush! Even if it should turn out that you are not Mr. Lloyd's daughter in reality, you will always have the consolation of knowing that he loved you as such. Nothing can deprive you of that." Then turning to Olive, she added: "Since Mr. Kelvin has made this very clever discovery—which, mind you, as I said before, has yet got to be proved—he is, doubtless, clever enough to have found out the person to whom Mr. Lloyd's property really does belong?"

"The heir-at-law is a certain Mr. Gerald Warburton, a nephew of Mr. Lloyd, but a person whom Mr. Kelvin has never seen."

"But a person with whom he will at once place himself in communication?"

"Undoubtedly, madam."

"Miss Lloyd's interests in this matter must not be allowed to suffer. The case appears to be one that requires the most minute and strict investigation, and I shall at once place it in the hands of Mr. Barclay."

Olive bowed. "Mr. Kelvin will no doubt either seek an interview with Miss. Lloyd, or write her full particulars, as soon as ever he is strong enough to do so."

"I decline to let Miss Lloyd be troubled in the affair. She is going up to town with me on Monday next. Mr. Kelvin had better communicate direct with Mr. Barclay."

Again Olive bowed. "I will not fail to deliver your ladyship's message."

"Perhaps, after all, it's quite as well that you did not marry Captain Dayrell," said Lady Dudgeon to Eleanor. "He would hardly have liked having to give up your dowry."

Eleanor rose to her feet, and stood for a few moments with her hands pressed to her temples, as though striving to realize to herself the strange tidings that had just been told her. "I have no name—no home," she said, in a dreamy way, as if communing with herself. "I can work for my living; I am not afraid of that. But—but I have lost my father, and I have no name!"

At this instant the door was opened, and in walked Sir Thomas. "Eh—eh—what's this? what's this?" he said, cheerfully. "Hope I'm

not intruding, as what's-his-name says in the play. Rehearsing a little comedietta, or what?"

"Run away to your room now, my dear," said Lady Dudgeon, as she rose and kissed Eleanor. "Every cloud has its silver lining. Keep up your spirits, and remember that you shall never want for a home as long as Sir Thomas and I are on this side of the grave."

Eleanor did not wait for another word, but hurried out by the opposite door as Sir Thomas came forward. Then the baronet had to be told everything, and it is needless to say how great was his surprise, which he expressed in far more voluble terms than his wife had done.

"If our Nelly ain't Jacob Lloyd's daughter, who's child is she?" he said, after he had had time to calm down a little. "Kelvin found that out, I suppose, at the same time that he found out the other."

"At present he has no clue whatever to the parentage of Miss Lloyd."

"Why, it's quite a romance! I must call and see Kelvin to-morrow, and talk it over with him myself."

"To-morrow is Sunday, Sir Thomas," said her ladyship, severely. "And on Monday morning we start for town."

"Ah, so we do," said the baronet, scratching his chin with an air of perplexity.

"I have decided to place Eleanor's interests in the hands of Mr. Barclay, so that the less you interfere personally in the matter the better."

"Quite right, my dear, quite right. But what's to become of the poor girl meanwhile?"

"For the present she will stay with us as usual. It is too early yet to legislate for her future." Her ladyship said this with an air that seemed to forbid further discussion. Her husband took the hint, and remarking that he had several important letters to write, he trotted back to the library.

"I am going to have a cup of chocolate in my dressing-room," said her ladyship to Olive. "Unless you are in a hurry to get back home, you may come and keep me company."

Olive was in no hurry to get back; in fact, she had something for her ladyship's private ear, and was glad of such an opportunity for telling it.

Lady Dudgeon, on her side, was actuated by a very natural desire to elicit from Miss Deane some further particulars of the strange story which she had just heard. She felt sure that there must be several interesting details, which it might not be advisable that Eleanor should be made acquainted with, but which Miss Deane could have no object in keeping from her. It was certainly not her intention to cross-question Olive: she was above doing that; a delicate hint to Miss

Deane that her ladyship was willing to listen to anything she might feel disposed to tell her ought to be sufficient to elicit any details that might hitherto have been kept in the background.

Notwithstanding the kind way in which she had spoken to Eleanor, Lady Dudgeon felt very considerably annoyed in her own mind at the thought that her pet protégée, whom she had taken everywhere and introduced to everybody, lauding her to the skies as everything that was good and beautiful, and who had, in a certain sense, as the presumed heiress of twenty thousand pounds, shed a reflected lustre on her chaperon, should turn out to be nobody knew whom, and without a sixpence to call her own. Nothing could have been more mortifying. She had liked the girl from a child, and would no doubt have continued to like her just as much had Jacob Lloyd died a bankrupt, and would probably have made a sort of humble companion of her, or would, in any case, have seen that she was properly provided for; but to have introduced the girl to all her fine friends and acquaintances on a footing of equality, and now to discover that she had no claim to the status so given her—that was indeed a bitter pill for her ladyship to swallow. She knew well, no one better, how censorious is that society of which she herself formed a component atom; how one of the chief conditions of its existence is that it shall revenge itself without mercy on every faux pas of its votaries in which they may be found out. She knew quite well the sort of remarks that people would make. They would say that she had wilfully allowed herself to become a party to a fraud. They would say that she had done her best to pass off a portionless girl as an heiress, and, in the eyes of society, what crime could be more heinous than that? It was very, very mortifying, and she could not help, in her own secret heart, visiting upon Eleanor some portion of blame for what had happened. It seemed well-nigh incredible to her that the girl could have lived all these years in utter ignorance that she was not Jacob Lloyd's daughter. Of course, all these minor points would have to be inquired into and thoroughly sifted later on. Much bitterness was yet to come, but the foretaste she had of it already was very far from being to her liking.

Not a shadow of all this was discernible in her ladyship's manner as Miss Deane followed her upstairs; but Olive had a poisoned arrow in her quiver of which Lady Dudgeon knew nothing.

A cup of chocolate was brought for each of them, and Lady Dudgeon, as she sipped at hers, chatted away to her companion about half a score indifferent topics—about Sophy and Carry, and what girls they were for wearing out their boots; about the late flower show; about Mrs. Diplock's last baby, and the state of Mr. Kelvin's health; while waiting for an opportunity to work the conversation round to the desired point. But Olive was in no mood for such manœuvring. She had something to say, and she was determined to say it. A break

in the equable flow of her ladyship's small-talk was caused by the intrusion of a servant to ask a question, and out it came as soon as the door was shut.

"There is one circumstance that took place while I was at Stammars," began Olive, "which, I have sometimes thought since, I ought to have mentioned to your ladyship at the time. To-day I regret more than ever that I omitted to do so."

"To what circumstance do you allude, Miss Deane?"

"Your ladyship must please to pardon the question, but did it never strike you, did you never notice, that there was some hidden understanding between Miss Lloyd and Mr. Pomeroy?"

"Good gracious, Miss Deane, whatever do you mean?"

Lady Dudgeon was surprised for the moment out of her equability.

"To put the case in plain language, and it will perhaps be best to do so," said Olive: "has your ladyship never had reason to suspect that Miss Lloyd and Mr. Pomeroy were engaged to each other?"

"Impossible! such a thing is utterly impossible!" was Lady Dudgeon's emphatic reply. "I know Miss Lloyd too well to believe anything of the kind. For once, Miss Deane, your surmises have led you altogether astray."

"Possibly so; I hope so," said Olive, resignedly.

There was an awkward silence. Her ladyship fidgeted, but said nothing. Singular to say, she seemed far more put out by what Olive had just said to her than by the far more important disclosure that had been made to her half an hour previously.

"You—you mentioned some circumstance," she said at last, not without a touch of irritation. She felt as though Olive were doing her a personal injury.

"Yes; a little circumstance of which I was the accidental witness. But probably your ladyship will not think it worth while to listen to it."

"Probably it is not worth listening to, but still there can be no harm in your telling me."

"One evening, some two or three weeks before my cousin was taken ill," began Olive, "I was sitting in the bow window of the back drawing-room. The curtains were partly drawn, and when Miss Lloyd came into the room she did not see me. She sat down at the piano and began to play, and as there was no third person present I saw no reason for making my presence known. But after a time Mr. Pomeroy came in. He had just returned from a journey, and was evidently in search of Miss Lloyd. He hurried up to her, and, before I had time to say a word, he had folded her in his arms. Then he called her his darling, and kissed her several times."

"How dreadful—how very dreadful!" exclaimed Lady Dudgeon, with a sort of terror.

"And then——Miss Lloyd kissed him back."

Lady Dudgeon could only put down her cup of chocolate and groan.

In saying that Eleanor kissed Gerald back, Olive told a lie, a weakness that she was never guilty of unless she had some particular end to serve.

"And do you really mean to affirm, Miss Deane, that you saw these —these shocking things with your own eyes?" Lady Dudgeon contrived to say at last.

"Certainly. Exactly as I have told your ladyship."

It was indeed dreadful. She had been hoodwinked and bamboozled under her own roof, and by this girl for whom she had done and sacrificed so much. Her feelings had been outraged in their tenderest point. Eleanor Lloyd was deposed from her throne for ever. What could anyone do for a person whose tastes were so ineradicably vulgar?

Lady Dudgeon strove her hardest to hide from Olive the effect which her words had upon her. "Well, well, young people will be young people till the end of the chapter," she said at last, with a ghastly attempt at cheerfulness.

"Mr. Pomeroy will now have an opportunity of proving the disinterestedness of his affection," said Olive, in her slow, incisive way. "He can now let the world see that it was not Miss Lloyd's money, but Miss Lloyd herself, that he fell in love with."

"What a strange person you are, Miss Deane!" her ladyship could not help saying.

Olive smiled coldly, and then rose to go.

CHAPTER XXXII.

WINGED WORDS.

It was not in the nature of things that Sir Thomas Dudgeon should long keep to himself the news which had just been told him. He was bursting to tell somebody, and as Gerald was to a certain extent one of the family, it seemed only right that Gerald should be told. So into the sympathetic ear of his secretary the whole story was volubly poured, with many a comment, and many an expression of sympathy for poor unfortunate Eleanor. "I feel as if I loved her better now than ever I did before," the baronet finished up by saying. "She shall never want for a home as long as I'm master at Stammars."

"It has come at last, and I'm glad of it," said Gerald to himself, "and has thereby saved me the necessity of telling a very disagreeable story. I can't at all understand why Kelvin should have kept this

knowledge to himself for so long a time. There seems to me something strangely underhand in his way of dealing with the affair. However, better late than never—better that she should hear it from him than from me. I must go and find her at once."

Fortunately, Sir Thomas did not detain him long. The old gentleman was anxious to have an hour or two with Cozzard, and to go round the farm on Grey Dapple once again. He sighed to think that it would be his last opportunity for doing so before his return to that hateful London. On Monday morning they were all to go up to town, and then farewell to the dear delights of the country for at least two months to come.

Gerald's puzzle was how to contrive an interview with Eleanor without the knowledge of Lady Dudgeon. As it happened, he was on pretty good terms with Tipper, the young person who, among her other duties, acted as maid to Miss Lloyd. Her he now contrived to capture, and putting half a crown into one of her hands, and a note into the other, he found no difficulty in inducing her to do his bidding. All he said in the note was—"Pray do me the favour of meeting me for five minutes in the conservatory as soon as possible." Ten minutes later Eleanor was there.

A faint blush suffused her face as she came towards Gerald, but it was easy to see that she had been crying. She took Gerald's extended hand frankly, and then, before she knew how it happened, he had possession of the other one also. "I have heard everything," he said, "and I could not rest till I had seen you."

She did not answer for a moment, but her eyes flushed with tears, and Gerald felt her hands tremble within his like two frightened birds.

"It is a very strange story," she said, "and I feel at present that I cannot altogether realize it."

"It is indeed a strange story—far too strange for Kelvin to lend himself to unless he had satisfied himself that it was true."

"The hardest—the bitterest part is to discover that he whom I loved so dearly while he lived, and whose memory I have cherished so fondly since I lost him, was not my father—was nothing but my benefactor. It makes me feel as if there were no such thing as reality in the world, as if life itself were nothing more substantial than a dream." She sighed, and releasing her hands from love's sweet custody, she went and sat down on a garden chair, and Gerald seated himself close by her.

"Nothing can change my love for him, or cause it to diminish by one iota," she said. "If he was not my father in reality, he acted a father's part by me, and he was my father in the sight of Heaven. God bless him! God bless him for ever!" she said, passionately, and then she burst into sobs.

Gerald thought it best to say nothing for a little while; but

he took her hand and pressed it softly to his lips, and was not repulsed.

In four or five minutes Eleanor had recovered her calmness. "You asked me to meet you here, Mr. Pomeroy," she said, "having something, I presume, that you wish to say to me, and here am I monopolising your time with my own selfish troubles. But you must forgive me this once, and I will not offend again."

"You are right. I have something to say to you," said Gerald, earnestly. "Sir Thomas has told me everything. You are no longer the heiress people believed you to be. You are poor like myself. Pray pardon my frankness; but that very poverty it is that gives me courage to speak." He paused for a moment, and in the pause they both heard the plashing of a tiny fountain in the distance, and the crabbed voice of old Sanderson crooning some old-world ballad to himself as he bent over his work.

"Several weeks ago, in a moment of passion," resumed Gerald, "I said certain words to you which, bearing in mind the reason that first brought me to Stammars, ought never to have been said by me. I confessed my fault, and you forgave me. Since that time, whatever my feelings may have been, I have so far schooled myself as not to offend again. Now the case is different. No one can say now that I seek you for your money. The reason which has kept me silent so long exists no longer. To-day—here—now—I can tell you how dearly I love you—how dearly I have loved you from the moment I first saw you! Here, to-day, I ask you whether you can give me back love for love, heart for heart—whether you can learn to care for me sufficiently to share your poverty with my poverty and become my wife?"

Again he stooped and kissed her hand, but she would not let him keep it. Her eyes were wet, her bosom heaving. Her colour came and went, then left her altogether. Twice she tried to speak, but could not.

"Oh, Mr. Pomeroy," she said at last, "your words have come upon me so suddenly that indeed I know not how to answer them! Your pride would not let you seek me when you believed me to be rich: my pride will not let me give myself to you now that I am poor."

"But supposing," said Gerald, "I had come to you at eleven o'clock this morning—supposing I had come to you five minutes before Miss Deane delivered her message, and had asked you then to become my wife, what would your answer have been?"

This was a question that seemed to require consideration. "When you asked me to meet you here, I thought you had something to tell me. I did not know that I was coming here to be catechised."

"Young ladies can't be expected to know everything," said Gerald, demurely. "What I had to tell you I have told. To you, perhaps, it seemed hardly worth the hearing. To me it means everything."

She turned her eyes for a moment on his. Their glance seemed to say, "Pity my embarrassment, and don't say cruel things to me."

"I must repeat my question," said Gerald. "If you were as rich to-day as you believed yourself to be yesterday, and I were what I am, would you in that case reject my suit as positively as you are doing now?"

"I hardly know. Perhaps not," was the whispered answer.

"Those words are enough. They tell me everything—they tell me that you love me!" cried Gerald. "If you would not have rejected me yesterday, you shall not reject me to-day!" and before Eleanor knew what had happened, she was folded tightly in his arms, and a rain of sweet kisses was falling on her forehead, her eyes, and her lips.

It was fully half a minute before she could free herself. "You are the most impetuous person I ever met with," she said. "And see how you have crushed my collar. It's—it's really disgraceful." And with that she turned of her own accord, and shyly hid her face on Gerald's shoulder.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

VAN DUREN'S FLIGHT.

When Max Van Duren came to his senses he found himself in darkness and alone. A low damp wind was blowing in from the sea, sighing and groaning as if burdened with messages from the dying to loved ones at home. The tide had come to its height, and was now flowing out again, with deep muttered undertones that lent solemnity to the darkness. Van Duren's first thought was that he had died and was coming to life again in another world. Presently he felt something trickling slowly and softly down his face, and his finger following the tiny stream to its source, found that it proceeded from a huge gash in the side of his head. Then in a flash the whole circumstances of the evening came back to him—the scene in the room at the hotel, his attempt to steal the casket, the sudden apparition of Ambrose Murray, the scene in the balcony, and his own wild leap out into the darkness. Whither had that leap landed him? He was now lying on his side, and he contrived to raise himself on one elbow and look round, but only to fall back next minute with a groan. He could see the sky and he could hear the sea, and he could make out that his body seemed lying among some large stones or pieces of rock, but beyond that he could tell nothing. He lay very quiet for a little while, thinking with all his might. What troubled him most of all—far more than his own present condition—was the doubt as to whether the vision of Ambrose Murray, which he had seen in the room, was that of a real man or merely a spectre. He was no

believer in ghosts—or he told himself that he was not, despite his strange experience of the face in the glass—but for all that, he was inclined to doubt the bodily existence of Murray. "I was weak and ill and excited," he said to himself. "I had eaten nothing for four-and-twenty hours. My nerves were in a state of tension that had become almost unbearable. I was just in a state to see or imagine anything. I had been thinking of Murray, and I imagined that I saw him there bodily before me. If my brain had only been as cool then as it is now, I should never have seen him. With the daylight these silly fancies will vanish—but will it ever be daylight again?"

Even while he was reasoning with himself, a thin streak of pallid grey was beginning to lighten in the east, though he saw it not for a little while. He was weak with long fasting and loss of blood. The calmness of despair had settled down upon him. He neither knew where he was nor cared greatly to know. Had anyone been there to whom he could have given himself up, he would have yielded himself willingly. "The game's played out and I have lost it," he muttered to himself again and again.

But little by little the dawn broadened, and the stars paled one by one, and with the slow coming of the daylight there grew upon Van Duren a restless desire to know what it was that had really befallen him. His mood changed. The wish to live, to escape, began to grow again within him. But first to ascertain where he was and what had happened to him. Bit by bit, as the daylight deepened, and first one object and then another shaped itself faintly out of the darkness, he began to realize his position. There below him was the sea, there above shone the white buildings of the hotel—there, in fact, was the very balcony over which, in his fright, he had so madly leaped. He had come down on his head and had at once been rendered insensible, and his senseless body had begun to turn over and over in its rapid progress down the steep face of the cliff to the wild waves lapping at its feet, for at that time it was nearly high water. But about two-thirds of the way down, his body had been caught by two projecting boulders, and there held, and there it was now. The box for which he had risked so much had been dashed from his arms in the fall, and, rolling down the cliff, had doubtless been carried far out to sea by the refluent tide.

Van Duren did not know—he never knew—that the people of the hotel, urged on by Ambrose Murray after his return to consciousness, had come out with lanterns to search for him, but without much expectation of being able to find him. They knew well what a little chance of life anyone would have who leaped over that balcony, either by day or night. Had the tide been out, they would have gone down to the sands, in the full expectation of finding the stranger's body at the foot of the cliff. But the tide was up at the time, and if not killed by the fall, Van Duren would undoubtedly be drowned and his body

carried out to sea. It seemed useless to make any prolonged search, and they quickly took themselves and their lanterns indoors.

As daylight advanced, the necessity of getting away from so dangerously prominent a position to some place of shelter and security impressed itself with increasing force on Van Duren's attention. Besides which, he was the prey to a burning thirst. When he began to move, it seemed as if every bone in his body were bruised—but move he must. There was now a broad stretch of brown sand at the foot of the cliff. If he could only reach that, he could manage to crawl along it, and so, in time, reach the inn where he had taken shelter yesterday. He was dreadfully weak and ill, but the effort must be made. He got down to the sands at last, but how he could not have told anyone—he hardly knew himself: and so, by about half-past six, he found himself once more in the shelter of the little inn.

To the landlord, his story that while walking in the dark he had stepped over the edge of the cliff, seemed by no means improbable Such slips had happened before to strangers, and in more than one case with fatal results. So his head was washed and strapped up, his clothes well brushed, and some breakfast put before him. He tried to eat, but could not; he could only drink. But while thus left alone for awhile he had to consider what his next step ought to be. It seemed by no means improbable that his enemies might come to the conclusion that he had lost his life through his mad leap from the balcony. In that case, they would probably trouble themselves no further about him. But in so serious an affair it would not do to leave anything to chance. Now that their business at Marhyddoc was at an end, they would probably hasten back to London; and it was just as likely as not that one of the first things they would do would be to obtain a warrant for his arrest, and send some one to Spur Alley in search of him. In such a case his only chance of safety lay in being beforehand with his enemies. If he could only reach Spur Alley before them, he could possess himself of the money in the safe, and then, leaving Pringle in charge of the premises, seek some secure hiding-place, and there await the progress of events. Even with a start of one or two days only, there were a good many things that he could turn into cash and, if the worst came to the worst, why, there was that other world across the Atlantic, where energy and talent never fail to attain their meed of reward. To catch the next train back to London was evidently the first step that it behoved him to take. An hour later he was at the station.

As a slight measure of precaution, in case there should be any inquiry made after him at Marhyddoc, he took a ticket as far as Crewe only. Arrived at that station, it would be an easy matter for him to book to any point he liked. He had not been in the train more than five minutes before he fell into a deep sleep, and remembered nothing

more till he was roused to give up his ticket at Crewe. He got out of the carriage, giddy, dazed, staggering like a man the worse for drink. He had evidently lost a great quantity of blood while lying exposed on the cliff. A cup of coffee and cognac revived him in some degree. He was determined to get forward to London at all risks, and he now rebooked to Euston. He was fortunate enough this time to get a compartment to himself. The giddiness in his head still continued, and to this was now added a strange, surging noise in his ears. When travelling in former days, he had often amused himself by fancying that, underlying the roar and rattle of the train, there was a kind of rude articulate voice, and by trying to find out the words that the voice said to him. To-day he heard this voice clearly enough, and clearly enough he understood the two words that it said to him—that it kept on repeating, with a kind of rhythmic iteration, hundreds, nay, thousands of times—two words only, without change or variation, "Stop, murderer!" At first it was a relief when the train halted for a minute or two at a station; for a minute or two the voice ceased to stab him with the repetition of its dull, passionless cry. But by-and-by, to his previous torment there was added this other, that the moment the train came to a standstill at a station he heard voices, at first far away in the distance, then gradually coming nearer, the voices of men in pursuit eager, full of menace, always crying aloud the same two words, "Stop murderer!" He knew quite well, and it was a fact that he kept repeating to himself as earnestly as though he were striving to impress it upon some second person, that these voices were altogether imaginary—a delusion of his own weakened brain. But that did not prevent the illusion from growing on him to such an extent that, after a time, he found himself getting quite excited lest the train should not start again before the pursuing voices, growing momentarily louder, should come yelling on to the platform itself, and proclaim his terrible secret to the world at large.

What an everlasting journey it seemed to the poor, haunted wretch! At length Willesden was reached, and there Van Duren alighted. There was some sort of vague idea floating in his brain that at every London terminus there might already be some one on the look-out for him, and he would not venture into Euston. He chose rather to make his way on foot through the starlit lanes—for it was dark again by this time—as far as Cricklewood. There he found a return cab, and into that he got, and was driven to town.

In the streets of London, busy even at that late hour, there seemed shelter and protection for him. Here he was only one atom among four million others. What place could there be to hide in like London itself? He still heard the voices in the distance, but the roar and rattle of the streets partially drowned them. He discharged his cab at the corner of Eastcheap, and made his way towards Spur Alley on foot

It was necessary to use most extreme caution in approaching his ouse. For aught he knew to the contrary, there might have been ome one set to watch it already. For fully half an hour he lingered bout it, without daring to go too near to it. There was no light in it isible from the street, except in Bakewell's underground kitchen. Everything looked as quiet, dark, and secure as usual. Suddenly a appy thought struck him. He knew the tavern that Pringle was in he habit of frequenting. Perhaps Pringle was there now. It was orth his while to go and see. From his clerk he could at once learn hether any particular inquiries had been made after him during his bsence.

Jonas Pringle, in the act of conveying a glass of hot rum-and-water o his mouth, had never been more startled in his life than he was hen his eyes met those of Max Van Duren staring fixedly at him hrough the glass door of the tavern. He put down his glass untasted, nd for a moment or two he thought that his master was dead, and hat he had seen his ghost. But presently the face appeared again, nd beckoned him to go out into the street. Then, when he had got utside under the gaslight, he saw that it was indeed his master, but erribly changed. Half a dozen eager questions satisfied Van Duren hat no particular inquiry had been made after him and that Pringle new nothing. It was hadly likely, at so late an hour of the night, that nyone would come and ask for him. He might utilise the next few ours in making his preparations and getting clear away. So Pringle as sent first to open the door, and then, two minutes later, Van Duren slid in like a shadow, and heard, with a sigh of relief, the heavy loor locked and bolted behind him. For a few hours to come there would be rest and safety.

He said nothing to Pringle explanatory of his sudden appearance, or of the condition in which he was—unshaven, haggard, and with a great wound on one side of his head. He flung himself on to a couch, and told Pringle to lower the gas and order some coffee. He hardly seemed to hear his clerk's explanation that the Bakewells had gone out for a holiday, but that he, Pringle, would make him some coffee. Five minutes later, when Pringle came to ask him whether he would not like some toast with his coffee, he was fast asleep on the sofa.

Pringle went back to his coffee-making, chuckling to himself, "What a fool he was to come in search of me, if he only knew! What a fool he is to let me make his coffee for him! Why shouldn't I put a dose of poison in it? That wouldn't be such a bad sort of revenge; and if I hadn't decided on something different, I might perhaps have adopted it. He looks half crazy to-night. Something queer has happened to him while he's been away. How did he come by that gash in his head? But all that matters nothing to me. It only matters to me

that he's here, under this roof, in my power. Better, far better f him had he never set foot across this threshold again!"

He was wide awake when Pringle took in the coffee. "This is ki of you, Pringle," he said, and he began to drink it eagerly.

"I find that I shall have to leave home again the first thing in t morning," he said. "I shall sit up a great part of the night arrangi matters, as I may have to go away for some considerable time. Yo however, may go to bed. I will call you about six, and will then gi you all needful instructions before going away."

Pringle nodded his usual careless good-night, and went. But i stead of going upstairs to the room he usually occupied, he took his shoes and stole down to the basement floor. He had put out t kitchen gas before taking up the coffee, but a few embers still glow in the grate.

In the passage that led from the foot of the stairs to the stron room there was still a faint glimmer of gas, as there was in the stron room itself, in which the gas was seldom turned entirely off. Th safe was locked as usual, and seemed never to have been touched sin Van Duren left home.

"He's nearly sure to come down here some time in the night, an here I'll wait for him," muttered Pringle to himself.

He groped about in the dark till he had found Bakewell's easy-chai in which he established himself comfortably in front of the fire, with h feet on another chair, and there in the dark he waited. He could he Van Duren moving about occasionally, and two or three times he seeme to pace the room for several minutes. The fire slowly burnt itse out, the crickets chirped loudly in the silence, the City clocks clange out the hours one after one, some lightly and carelessly as it seeme others solemnly and slowly, as though warning all who might he them that they were another hour nearer eternity. Still Jonas Pringl sat waiting, nor ever closed an eye.

At length, about three o'clock of the early summer morning, he hear footsteps slowly descending the stone stairs, and he knew that th occasion for which he had waited so long had come at last. Th kitchen door was shut, but not latched, so that he could hear but nc see anything that might happen outside. The footsteps came slowl and deliberately downstairs, and then went along the passage toward the strong-room. Then Pringle, listening intently, heard the bolts the great iron door shoot back as the key was turned, and next momen he knew that Max Van Duren had entered the strong-room. He wa still without his shoes, and rising from his seat he stepped noiselessl across the floor, and opening the door a little way, looked out. Ther was still the same faint glimmer of light in the passage, but the brighte glare that issued through the open door of the strong-room showe that Van Duren had turned up the gas inside. As quietly and stealthil

as a tiger creeps on its prey, Pringle stole along the passage, and only paused when he reached the fringe of stronger light that issued from the room.

There, with his back towards him, stood Max Van Duren, peering into the open safe, some of the contents of which were already scattered on the floor. For a few seconds—while a clock might tick twenty times—he stood watching him with a devilish sneer on his face. Suddenly Van Duren turned, and his eyes met the eyes of Pringle. An exclamation of surprise burst from his lips; but before he had time to stir from the place where he was standing, Pringle had dashed forward, had seized the handle of the door, had pulled it to with all his might, and had turned the key. Max Van Duren was locked up in his own strong-room, ten feet below the surface of the earth.

"Caged at last!" muttered Pringle to himself, as he drew out the key and put it in his pocket. "Past three o'clock: it will be broad daylight soon. I think I could relish some breakfast. Pity old Mother Bakewell isn't here to get it ready for me." Whistling a tune under his breath, he went back into the kitchen, flung open the shutters, and began to set about lighting a fire. "Shall I have those two eggs boiled or poached?" he asked himself, as he prepared a foundation of firewood and paper. "I think I'll have 'em poached, just for variety. I'm sick of boiled eggs."

Van Duren had not been silent all this time. "Pringle! what devil's trick is this?" were his first words as he sprang at the closing door. "Pringle, Pringle, I say, you have fastened me in! Open the door, you fool, or it will be worse for you!" But Pringle was in the kitchen, cutting the string of a bundle of firewood.

"Come, now, Pringle, my good fellow, a joke's a joke, as everybody knows, but I've had enough of this. If you only knew how important is the business I've got to attend to, you wouldn't keep me here, I know." Pringle by this time was down on his knees, blowing away at the blaze like a pair of old wheezy bellows.

"What do you want of me? What's your grudge against me?" cried Van Duren, behind the iron door. "Do you want an advance of salary? You shall have it. Twenty pounds a year advance. Do you hear that? Twenty pounds a year. If that's not enough—thirty. Only open the door, and I promise you fifty. Think of that—fifty pounds a year advance!" Still no answer, though he could plainly hear the rattle of crockery, as Pringle proceeded to set out the breakfast-tray. "Come, now, Pringle, we've had enough of this tomfoolery. I'd like to join you over breakfast. I want to tell you my plans. I want to talk things over with you before I go. Open the door, there's a good fellow."

The only notice Pringle took of this appeal was to turn the gas three parts off at the meter, the effect of which was to reduce the jet in the

strong-room to a mere point of flame, and so leave Van Duren in almost total darkness. "One had need be economical in these days," muttered Pringle to himself. "Gas is very expensive."

For a few moments Van Duren was silent. It might be that he began to despair, that he began to see how useless any further appeals would be, that it began to dawn on his mind what Pringle's purpose really was. But in a little while he spoke again. "Pringle, Pringle, I say, where are you? What have I done to you that you should serve me thus? Fiend—monster—bloodthirsty villain! If you want to get rid of me, knock me on the head and have done with it. Don't leave me here to starve. That is too horrible!"

"These eggs are hardly so fresh as they might be, for all I gave twopence each for 'em," muttered Pringle. "But that's the worst of London eggs—you never can depend on 'em." Then he made himself some toast, and took care not to spare the butter, and presently everything was ready for him to begin. "I like my coffee made French fashion," he said, contemplatively. "It's certainly an improvement on the old English style. Those Frenchmen don't know a great deal, but they do know how to make coffee."

When everything was ready for him to sit down to, he walked along the passage to the iron door and rapped at it with his knuckles. "Max Van Duren, are you there?" he said, simply and sternly.

Van Duren, who had been silent for some little while, responded eagerly. "Yes, yes, Pringle, I am here! I knew it was only one of your queer practical jokes."

"I am now going to get my breakfast, after which I shall smoke a pipe. When I have finished my pipe, I will come and have some talk with you. Till then you may as well be silent, and behave like a reasonable being." With that he turned on his heel.

"Pringle, my good fellow, don't leave me here all that time; don't leave me here in the dark in this horrible den!" But Pringle was gone already, and this time he shut behind him the wooden door at the foot of the stairs that opened into the passage, and then he shut the kitchen door, so as to ensure himself still further against being disturbed; then he rubbed his hands with an air of enjoyment, and proceeded to pour out his coffee.

He took half an hour for his breakfast, and another half-hour for the pipe that followed, and then he told himself that he was ready for business. All this time the prisoner in the strong-room had maintained the most perfect silence. Opening the outer door, Pringle traversed the passage, and, as before, rapped with his knuckles on the inner door. As before, he said, "Max Van Duren, are you there?"

"I am here."

"Then listen; come closer to the door and listen. You would doubtless like to know why I have shut you up here. That is what I

am going to tell you. But first you must answer me one or two questions. Do you know the village of Dunhope, in Berkshire?"

No answer. Pringle repeated the question with more emphasis. "If you won't answer my questions, I can't tell you what you are so anxious to know."

"I did know a place of that name some years ago."

"Just so. You knew it some years ago. If we were to say seven or eight years ago, we should not be very wide of the mark. Knowing Dunhope so well, you perhaps knew a young girl who lived there once on a time: a girl whose name was Jessie Ember. Eh! am I right or wrong?"

"You are right; I did know a girl of that name."

"We are getting on famously. A little bird has whispered to me that you made love to this girl, that you persuaded her to leave her situation, and that, relying on your solemn promise to make her your wife, you brought her to London; but that when you had once got her here, you quite forgot your promise to marry her. Are these things true, or are they not?"

There was a long pause. Then came the answer, with a sort of groan: "They are true."

"Soon tiring of the girl, you turned her adrift to starve or die, or—or to become one of earth's forlornest creatures; it mattered not to you." He paused, overcome by an emotion that, despite all his efforts, would not be quite suppressed.

"Am I not right?" he asked, a moment or two later. "Have you ever, from that day to this, troubled yourself to make one single inquiry after the girl whom you once swore that you loved better than life itself? Do you even know whether she is dead or alive?"

"Who are you that you talk to me in this way? By what right do you ask me these questions?"

"Who am I? I will tell you who I am. I am Jessie Ember's father! Who has more right to question you than I?"

"You her father! Oh Heaven!" It was little more than a whisper that seemed instinct with surprise, terror, and anguish.

"Scoundrel! unmitigated scoundrel!" began Pringle. Then he paused. "But I only demean myself by calling you names. You are where you are—and I am satisfied."

"What do you want of me? I am rich and——"

"Singular, isn't it, that I should have been with you all this time, and never have discovered till the other day that you are the man I have been looking for for years? But things do come about strangely in this world."

"Unlock the door, and I will make you rich for life."

"Ha! ha! I can be rich for life without unlocking the door."

"How?"

"By waiting till you are dead, and then constituting myself your heir. No will required. No legacy duty to pay. Funeral expenses next to nothing. I saw such a splendid grey rat leap from behind the old ledgers the other day."

"Villain! you would not murder me?"

"Murder you! Ha! ha! Certainly not. What put that idea into your head?"

"Then why don't you open the door?"

"Now you are asking a leetle too much—just a leetle. I would do anything in the world for you except open this door. You know you robbed me of my child—you ruined her and deserted her. It was only one of your little practical jokes. It's my turn now. This is one of *my* jokes: you don't object, I hope?"

"Then you are going to leave me here to starve—to die?"

"Oh no, I'm not going to leave you. There you are mistaken. I shall come a dozen times a day to see you. These little dialogues are interesting. I'll bring my pipe after awhile, and come and keep you company; but on this side the door, you know—on this side the door."

"Have you no pity? Will nothing move you?"

"It will be quite a little holiday for you. Nothing to do—absolutely nothing to do. I will do all the business, attend to the letters, and answer all inquiries. 'Has Mr. Van Duren got back home yet?' 'No, sir, he is still in France, but I am expecting him every day.' Ha! ha! and you here all the time! Won't it be a lark, Van, my boy, eh?"

A deep groan was the only reply.

"And now I'm just going round the corner in search of an early glassful to digest my breakfast. Don't get downhearted, because I sha'n't be long away. No, no, I value you too much to stay away from you for very long."

And, turning on his heel, Jonas Pringle walked leisurely away, whistling to himself as he went.

(*To be concluded.*)

ON COURTESY.

HOW define true courtesy? It would seem almost as difficult as to describe the perfume of the violet, or the lustre of the gem containing, as it does within itself, both those qualities on which one of our modern thinkers so much dwells, "sweetness and light."

Courtesy belongs intrinsically to the possessor, and is no respecter of persons, manifesting itself to high and low alike; as when that true gentleman, Roland Caxton, hesitated in passing the maid-servant who was cleaning the doorstep. It cannot belong, in its finest degree, to the selfish, egotistic, or time-serving, however conversant such may be with conventional forms of politeness; or however much the desire for praise, or the advisability of standing well with others, may induce a simulation of the real thing. The difference between gilding and real gold always remains. The one is apt to rub off and show the baser metal beneath, the other only shines the more brightly from the friction it meets with in the world.

The manners of a certain class are easily caught, and even these do much towards rendering the path of life less toilsome to the feet; but inward, as well as outward, sweetness is essential to that courtesy that so much beautifies existence, shedding around it a refining and softening influence, like the tender moonlight that veils defects, and throws a poetical glamour over even the mean and commonplace.

Courtesy springs, in the first place, from a sense of justice. We desire to give others their due; we do not hustle them out of their rightful place, but rather give way, "in honour preferring one another." Then follows the crowning grace of love, the divine "agape," adding to deference that delicate sympathy and appreciation which charms more than beauty, or talent, or wit, or any other quality the egotist may rely upon for winning the admiration or applause of society.

This finished courtesy requires self-restraint, and in many cases becomes a positive virtue. The courteous man must hold his countenance under control. He must not allow such expressions of dislike and annoyance to escape as may hurt others. He must hide all uncomfortable feeling. He must not carry a mournful countenance into gay company, or parade his own good fortune before the sorrowful.

All this does not preclude the truest sincerity. There are ways of stating an adverse opinion without wounding. The courteous man does not imply by his manner, "I know I am right, and you must be a stupid fellow to think otherwise;" nor does he judge hastily or severely where he thinks he sees cause to condemn. He remembers the limited

and one-sided nature of any truth the human mind can grasp, and like the umpire in the old story, knows that there is both a gold and a silver side to the shield, according to the point of view from which it is regarded.

It is the forgetfulness of this fact that makes those who boast of being plain speakers frequently so offensive. There would not be so much objection to having the truth placed before us, if we were only convinced that it was indeed the truth. But when the opinion so obtrusively set before us arises from a misunderstanding of circumstances, from a want of appreciation of difficulties and hindrances; when we are conscious that our mistakes and failures demand commiseration rather than blame, then we recoil from the insolent assumption of better knowledge, and resent the censure we feel to be undeserved.

But even if we are in error, if we have arrived at false conclusions, and have taken up erroneous impressions, courtesy will not show us the clayey nature of our idols under too startling an aspect. It will strive to disenchant us of our false gods gently; and by letting in the wholesome sunlight with tender care for our weakness, will allow us to see our mistake without any loud proclamation of superior wisdom, or hint of scorn for our blindness.

The courteous man is not only careful in speech, but his very attitudes are expressive. His greeting makes us feel that our presence is welcome; his manner of listening gives us to understand that what we are saying is interesting and merits attention. We are drawn out and encouraged by this silent acknowledgment that what we say may be worth hearing; and thus are placed at our best; and are sometimes astonished at the facility with which we express ourselves, unchecked and unchilled by inattention or indifference.

How often, when we are expatiating on a topic that interests us, are we brought to a pause, by the eye wandering away from us to some other object, or by the scarcely suppressed yawn. It is in vain that we are invited to resume the subject; the fire has been quenched, the light extinguished by that slight want of courtesy.

Nor should these attentions to the feelings of others be set down to insincerity or flattery. Each human being has surely something within him that commands our respect. "Every created man is a revelation in the flesh," says Novalis. None are so dull or ignorant but we may surely learn something through their means. To quote from good old George Herbert,

> "Do not grudge
> To pick out treasures from an earthen pot,
> The worst speak something good; if all want sense
> God takes a text and preaches patience."

There is no occasion to be untrue; no need voluntarily to seek the society of those whom we dislike, or to agree with opinions of which

we disapprove. According to Carlyle, "courtesy is not a falsehood nor a grimace, it need not be such."

No degree of familiarity should be allowed to do away with this fine courtesy. The tenderest relationships may be degraded, the closest friendships impaired by slight if continuous wounds, inflicted through want of attention to the amenities of life in the private circle of home. Courtesy should not be kept as a dress suit to be worn on state occasions only, but rather as a part of the frame itself, no more to be laid aside than the eye that sees, or the lips that speak. As Moore sings to us—

"Oh you that have the charge of Love,
Keep him in rosy bondage bound,
As in the Fields of Bliss above
He sits, with flow'rets fetter'd round;
Loose not a tie that round him clings,
Nor ever let him use his wings;
For ev'n an hour, a minute's flight
Will rob the plumes of half their light."

Whence first arose this flower of gentleness, this high-bred courtesy? Not in the wilderness; not where man led a solitary and selfish life, surrounded only by slaves subservient to his slightest behest. Not amongst scattered tribes whose normal state is warfare, each man's hand continually against his brother. The polite or civil man must be the inhabitant of a town, must be a citizen, and as such must have learned to acknowledge a mutual obligation with his fellow-citizens, thus establishing a code of justice.

Acts of courtesy may certainly be merely conventional, or they may be the outward manifestation of the higher inward courtesy. The grasp of the hand had in all probability two significations. In the times referred to, when war was the normal state, and man little better than a fighting animal, some mistrust naturally accompanied proffered friendship; each therefore grasped the weapon hand of the other, as a security against treachery. The other idea of clasping hands was undoubtedly that of "fastening together in peace and friendship," as Tylor expresses it; and he goes on to trace the etymology of the word peace to this action, finding it in the Sanscrit "pac," to bind.

It is now a piece of conventionality to take off the glove before shaking hands with a lady; but this custom began in the days of chivalry, when the glove was a steel gauntlet, a grasp from which might be painful.

The bow and the curtsey are but abbreviations of signs of submission, but a humanized form of the cowering of an animal before its master's rebuke. At present it exists in all gradations, from the Chinese "ko-tow," to the slight bend of the head in token of recognition or respect.

To uncover the head meant originally to remove the helmet, thus

laying aside the chief safeguard, and placing the person at the mercy of those present. Women do not uncover the head, never having worn a head-dress as a means of defence.

The courtesy shown to women, dating from the age of chivalry, arose not merely from the tenderness of the strong towards the weak, but also from the recognition of something divine in womanhood. A something that set her apart from the sordid self-seeking and hardness of heart too prevalent amongst those whose work lies in the camp, the forum, or the mart. Would that this ideal could be sustained! It is only this elevation of the sex that can give it a claim to that courteous treatment that has always been considered its due.

It is strange, in reviewing the writers who have drawn their characters from the ideal, how few there are who have given us the portraiture of the true gentleman, the "king of courtesy." Not those of the Byronian school; their heroes are too misanthropic, too cynical, too selfish. Not the Tremaines and Pelhams; they are too self-conscious, too fastidious, too highly varnished; we suspect some flaw under all that excessive outward seeming. Not those of the Guy Livingstone school; certainly not those.

Must we go back to Cervantes, to the immortal Don Quixote? In whom even the worldly and sensual soul of Sancho Panza recognized this subtle quality, and thence, even while acknowledging his master's madness, was ready to follow him because he loved him. To Shakspeare? Even in characters that might have been vulgarised by a less inspired hand, how the true feeling of the gentleman shows itself. Sir John Falstaff would not scruple to rob us of our tapestry or our silver cups, but he would not hurt our feelings, we might be sure of that. Touchstone was a fitting companion for princesses, and Benedick, with all his soldier-like bearing, and his ready and unflinching wit, is from head to foot a gentleman.

Scott has also left us many portraits of this class. Colonel Mannering, Julian Peveril, Lord Evandale, Ivanhoe, are all gentlemen. Differing in circumstances, in character, manners, and costume, they all agree in the possession of courtesy. Perhaps, of all modern authors, Thackeray has left us the highest ideals of this class; it suffices to mention the name of Colonel Newcome. Nor can we omit the remembrance of Sir Launcelot du Lac as Tennyson pictures him to us. Even in spite of the father's entreaty he could treat Elaine with no further "discourtesy" than to leave her and bid her "no farewell." To have wounded her further would have been impossible to him.

There is some danger that in these days of hurry and competition, this fine quality of courtesy may be hustled out of the world. It is for the younger generation to look to this, and to keep tended and watered the flower that adds so much of sweetness and beauty to the world.

ACROSS THE PLAINS.*

IT was a large cavalcade, that to which Mr. Tayler and his party were attached. Forty-three waggons in all, besides a number of mounted men, who acted as a sort of voluntary guard to the train. Quite a caravan, as they call such things in the East; and Nathalie Bruner likened it in her own mind to the procession that wended its way down the sides of Mount Ararat after the flood had subsided and Noah and his family once more found solid ground under their feet. Quite a caravan, sure enough—forty-three vehicles of different descriptions, strong, covered waggons predominating, loaded with goods, household furniture, and stores of various kinds, and drawn by horses, mules, or oxen.

At that period California could be reached in two ways: the long and often perilous voyage by sea round Cape Horn, and the perhaps not much less long and perilous journey by land from America. Mr. and Mrs. Tayler, under whose protection Nathalie Bruner had left home, preferred the latter route. The voyage to New York was made safely; and then they looked out for a company (or train) that might be starting to make the many weeks' journey overland. Now, a railway, as the world knows, starts from New York frequently, and conveys its passengers comfortably in one week to San Francisco.

It was all a new experience for Nathalie Bruner, and this long train of emigrants that they had joined seemed to her more curious than all. If her mother and her brother Roy could but see her now! she often thought. But she did not lose heart. Mrs. Tayler did at first, and openly lamented that she and her husband had not been contented to stay at home and make the best of their competency in the dear old land, rather than come toiling out to these rough and unknown places in search of gold.

The Americans consisted of seven or eight families, who had collected together from different states: Massachusetts and Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, Kentucky and Maryland, and Illinois. The rest were men travelling without the encumbrance of a family—men married and unmarried, old and young; farmers, mechanics of every grade and kind, students and merchants' clerks, with a sparse sprinkling of strictly professional men. All had drawn together to travel in company for temporary convenience and safety, and all were attracted westward by the same magnet—gold. A rough lot these people, as a whole; but there were sterling hearts amidst them.

* The readers of the ARGOSY may perhaps remember that some account of Nathalie Bruner, and of the cause which induced her to exile herself from her native land, appeared in the magazine in February, 1871, under the title, "A Sad Story."

Some of the families had brought their dogs with them; and one little crippled girl in the waggon next to that of Mr. Tayler had a canary in a cage, and a large Maltese cat. Such trifling things; but they hinted of home and homelike ways; and it was wonderful the amount of petting those dogs received, and the admiration the canary attracted. As for the cat, unlike most of her kind, she did not decamp at the first stopping place and set her face towards home, wailing as she went, but sat by the hour and the day in her young mistress's lap, sound asleep or purring contentedly.

It takes a journey like this to turn strangers into neighbours and neighbours into friends. These people had come from a dozen different points of the compass, and expected in a few weeks to be scattered again; but travelling day after day in company, camping together every night for greater security to life and property, they became sociable and intimate, seeking to interchange small courtesies. Mrs. Smith inquired with real interest after the welfare of Mrs. Jones's baby; while Jones himself expressed to Brown his hope that Mrs. Brown's neuralgia was better; and Brown was solicitous about that accident Robinson had met with yesterday, in laming the off ox in his team. It could not be otherwise. As to Mr. Tayler, there was no end to the help always being proffered him in putting up his tent, and such-like. He was a stranger and a gentleman, and unused to such work; and so, with innate hospitality and neighbourly feeling, they came forward to his rescue. When wood had to be fetched for fires during their encampment, or water sought for, the young men were eager to do it for Mr. and Mrs. Tayler, almost quarrelling which should best serve them.

"I'll tell you what it is, Maria," remarked Mr. Tayler to his wife, with a comical glance and a wink, "we are the most popular individuals in all the train. But it strikes me it is not you or I that's the attraction." The bit of good-natured raillery was, however, quite lost on Nathalie Bruner.

Poor Nathalie! I wonder if change of scene ever does as much for any of us as we expect it to do? I am quite sure that it had not yet done all for her that she had hoped.

The most finished coquette, who ever dazed and bewildered a man by her wiles, could not have distributed winning words and courteous smiles more equally and impartially among the dozen men who brought themselves at one time and another to her notice by these attentions, than did Miss Bruner. But no woman could well be less of a coquette than Nathalie; and she was more surprised than anyone else when one of them, named David Cardonnel, asked her to marry him. He was one of the superior amidst the emigrants: a good fellow and a handsome one, a man of culture; but she had never thought of him, or of any of them in any such way, and never would think it. She told

him so, simply and gravely, and that was the end. But he cared more for her after that than before, though he saw how useless it was. While all the time the secret cry of her own heart had been: "If it only were *not* David Cardonnel, but another!"

What glorious autumn days those were! Glorious as to air, and sun, and all that goes to make good weather for travelling and life bright; and the train made excellent progress in the journey towards the land rich in mines. Most of these people had toiled all their lives for very little gain, and the rich mines of California looked full of promise. It might be that the promise for many would not be realized. There occurred, ever and anon, some slight apprehension of danger from Indians—not enough to seriously alarm any but the very timid, but sufficient to keep the train alive and watchful. By advice, Mr. Tayler had purchased a pair of small, finely-finished pistols, and when they first approached the unsafe places, he gave one to his wife, the other to his ward, enjoining them for common prudence to keep their weapons always where they could lay hands on them at a minute's notice. Mrs. Tayler, in literal obedience to these instructions, wore hers in her belt, à la female brigand in a sensation drama; and the contrast between her placid face and manner and the deadly weapon so conspicuously displayed, was something bordering on the ludicrous. But Mrs. Tayler could see nothing ludicrous about it, when one day the pistol, carelessly handled, "went off." It went off most unexpectedly, doing no damage, it is true, but so frightening her that she refused to carry it again, and told her husband he must do the shooting himself if the Indians came.

As the weeks went by, however, in spite of tolerably good roads (for the roads were better than they used to be), of soft air and genial skies, our emigrants all grew more or less tired, and impatient to get to their journey's end. Next to a protracted sea voyage, there is nothing more tedious than a journey of a thousand miles by waggon across the plains, as those who have taken it too well know. To breakfast in the morning, ride or walk till noon, dine, and walk or ride till night, then supper and to bed, is a routine that, pleasant enough for awhile from the novelty and romance of the thing, is apt to grow tiresome at last. The women and children pined for some settled habitation, even if it were not home; while the men were anxious to reach the El Dorado that was to bring fortune to them all.

Even such a journey, though, does not last for ever. By degrees, one waggon after another said farewell to the rest, and travelled off to its own destination. At length only eight waggons out of the original forty-three were left; and these eight were all bound for the same spot—a new settlement called The Bend. It was a great satisfaction when this place was at length gained. One afternoon the waggons halted and drew up, and the emigrants knew with thankfulness that their

tedious and perilous march was over. Nathalie Bruner looked out.

Ten or twelve low-roofed, pine-board shanties and twice that number of tents were ranged in picturesque confusion around a saw-mill and a quartz-mill, both in full operation.

Such a rough-looking place! Logs, and lumber, and piles of rock and earth, and heaps of sawdust everywhere that the eye could rove. The roughest place our own travellers had ever seen, but full of life and bustling activity. The sound of saws and hammers was going briskly on where two or three new houses were in process of erection, teams were moving, and drivers yelling, and shouting, and laughing; and over all and above all, the rattle, and roar, and scrape, and crash of machinery was going on steadily.

The waggons were soon surrounded by an eager crowd of red-shirted miners with slouched hats and pantaloons tucked into the tops of their boots—all were anxious to see the new comers, and to hear the latest news from the States. Some of them were hilarious in their welcome; and Mr. Tayler had much ado in declining the numerous invitations to "drink a glass." One rollicking, good-natured Hibernian, brought up a bottle of choice wine to Nathalie, beginning upon it himself when she laughingly declined to touch it.

"Here's good luck to the young lady, an' shure she's the natest bit of womankind myself has seen since I coom to this haythenish country."

How much further he would have gone in his praises was never known, for a quiet man came up just then, touched him on the shoulder, and motioned him away with authority. Poor Nathalie's face flushed. Had she done wrong to come? She had never pictured that her exile would be cast amidst so rough and uncivilized a scene as this.

The quiet man, who was evidently a gentleman, had turned off also. Presently he came up again. He was about five or six-and-twenty, rather tall, slender, active, and good-looking. The grey eyes were honest, the face had great good sense. Taking off his hat as he glanced at Mrs. Tayler and Nathalie, he addressed Mr. Tayler, who, it must be confessed, was looking very rueful.

"I have a room or two at the back of my office," he said, indicating a house at some distance, over the door of which appeared a large sign: "Office of the Sacramento Mining Company." "I think the ladies will find a house, even if it is a poor one, more comfortable than a tent; and my waiting-boy, Tim, will help them to arrange things to their liking."

Of course so acceptable an offer was not to be refused. Mr. Tayler grasped his hand, Nathalie thanked him with her eyes. Poor Mrs. Tayler, swallowing down her tears, began to take heart, but said something about the inconvenience they should cause him.

"No, indeed, I shall only be too glad to have you," answered the hospitable stranger. "I see you are not accustomed to this kind of thing. Until your own house shall be built, it will be very pleasant to me if you will make use of the limited accommodations of mine. They are only bachelor quarters."

His name, he said was Hammond: and when he added that he was from the old country (but they had suspected it by his speech and manners), their faces did indeed light up. He was a civil engineer by profession, had come out here to look after the affairs of the Sacramento Mining Company, being himself a large shareholder in it, and had remained as manager. Very much taken were all the three travellers with Richard Hammond.

Bachelor quarters they were indeed, as was sufficiently evidenced by the disorder in the rooms when they entered them. Mr. Hammond explained that his boy Tim had the care of them mostly. "He has kept them as well as he could, I suppose," he remarked to Mr. Tayler; "but that best is not very well, as the ladies can see for themselves. Perhaps under their instructions Tim can do better." And with that Mr. Hammond bowed himself out, leaving Mrs. Tayler and Nathalie to bring order out of chaos if they could.

Tim was very willing to make himself useful to the ladies—"Real ladies," he pronounced them to be in confidence to his master, "not white trash like that O'Grady woman;" by which contemptuous appellation he meant Mrs. Bridget O'Grady, seamstress and laundress in chief; and almost the only woman of whom the place could boast until the arrival of these eight families to-day. It was curious to see how even here, beyond the outskirts of civilization, the enmity of races was kept up, and Celt and Negro hated each other cordially.

"Do you know what I should like to do, Nathalie?" cried poor Mrs. Tayler, sinking down on a stool.

"No. What?"

"Hang that wretched agent who vowed to my husband that this was a beautiful place, all laid out and civilized."

"We must make the best of it now," said Nathalie.

Mrs. Tayler knew that. She and Nathalie kept Tim busy enough for awhile, and in two hours' time something like order was evolved from the previous confusion. There really was plenty of space, and by careful arrangement beds and tables and chairs were so disposed that the house, which before held two persons, was found to hold five quite as comfortably—a brilliant triumph of housewifely skill.

When all was done, Nathalie, fatigued to the farthest point of endurance, and really ill, remained in her room, intending to retire soon to bed without waiting for supper. Through the door, which was slightly ajar, she heard Mr. Hammond's voice when he came in, expressing his surprise and satisfaction at the metamorphosis which had

been effected, and his sincere regret at Miss Bruner's indisposition.

It was a nice voice, a good voice, reminding her somewhat of Roy's; and while he talked to Mr. and Mrs. Tayler, she recalled what Tim had said of his master. "He's one of de best gen'l'men that eber lived, he is."

She had smiled at the lad's enthusiasm, never dreaming that the time would come when she would give heartfelt endorsement to every word. But not now; not yet. With her heart full of another, she could see in Richard Hammond only a pleasant stranger, handsome certainly, and as certainly a cultivated gentleman, a man who had opened his house to them with warm-hearted hospitality; but she could see nothing more. And with his voice still sounding in her ears, his voice so like Roy's, she fell asleep, conscious of a vague wish that she might never wake again.

The weeks went on. New dwellings were put up, and Mr. and Mrs. Tayler and Nathalie took possession of one of them. Rough, pine-board structures they were, like all the rest, but spacious enough, and serving admirably well in the lack of better. We estimate things by comparison: and the exiles soon learnt to like their home. The worst luck seemed to lie with Mr. Tayler. What golden schemes of money-making had been in his head and induced his coming out from his own land, he alone knew; but he found them melt away. He could not dig for gold; he could not work in the mines; he could not even saw timber all day; and he tried to reconcile himself to the fact that his emigration would be a failure. "It need not be," said Richard Hammond: "if he would only pocket pride—and everybody did that out there—and open a store for dry goods and groceries, he would make his fortune in no time." Mr. Tayler seized on the idea eagerly. No store had as yet been opened in the place, which was entirely in its infancy, and one was much needed. He lost no time in acting upon it. The necessary goods were procured after some delay, and the store was opened. The miners came flocking in, lavish of their money, as such men usually are, and the run of custom promised to be great.

"So we are fixed here for half a score years, if not for life," bewailed poor Mrs. Tayler.

But things in the new home grew comfortable and more comfortable by degrees. Richard Hammond was a frequent visitor: and Mr. Tayler saw, if no one else did, what he chiefly came for—the love of Nathalie Bruner.

"It will be a first-rate match for her, too," said he to himself. "Hammond is a good fellow, energetic and capable, and very well off; and of course he won't stop out here for ever. Maria snapped me up the other day when I hinted at this: but women can't see anything. *I* know. Here he comes, evening after evening, playing the flute to her,

or singing, or reading, or—as he calls it—improving her German: always, in fact, doing something to make this outlandish place pleasant to her. Last night he was talking to her about Germany, where he lived for two years, saying he should like to show her this thing in it, and show her that thing in it. What does that mean, I'd like to ask Maria? It is all as plain as a pikestaff. He is a man, too, in himself, that any young lady might be proud of, let alone his prospects and his money. I'm not so old myself yet that I can't read signs: and if Maria——"

"Tea is ready, John," cried Mrs. Tayler at this juncture, putting her head inside the door, and cutting short his soliloquy.

And when Mr. Tayler obeyed the summons and entered the cozy sitting-room, he found Nathalie at the window knitting away at some soft bright thing, and Mr. Hammond watching her.

"And Maria can see nothing but her tea-table," quoth he, with a touch of resentment.

Mr. Tayler was right. A very short while, and Richard Hammond made his proposals to Miss Bruner. They were civilly but firmly declined.

I wonder if there ever was a woman yet who fully understood her own heart, the needs of her own soul. We are all so prone to make mistakes, even in matters that most nearly concern our peace. And I think Nathalie made a profound mistake when she refused Richard Hammond.

"I will not marry him," she said to herself. "I will not marry any one. He is young and handsome and rich and good, and he loves me. He urges that in me he finds all his happiness in life: and what am I? Heartsick, homesick, with no heart to give him in return. No, no; it would not be right to listen to him."

And then came up the thought of another man who was not very good, but who had loved her once, and the whole soul of the woman writhed in bitter shame and self-scorn, for she knew that George Vanderware married was more to her than any other man could ever be. Would that old love *never* die? Was it to haunt her always? It had driven her out an exile from the place of her birth and the home of her childhood, and now she must give up this one true friend because of it. With such a woman as was Nathalie Bruner, it takes what almost, in the passing, seems a lifetime to uproot the heart's first love.

Even in the sharp pain of his own disappointment, Richard Hammond wondered at the dark desolation in her face as she turned to him when she gave him her answer. "You will think always that I have trifled with you, but I did not mean it," she said, drearily. "All the pleasure that I have known here I owe to you. But you will stay away now, and I shall be alone."

The answer was like Richard Hammond, faithful, generous.

"I do not think you have trifled with me, and I shall not stay away unless you bid me. If I cannot be your husband, Nathalie, I shall be none the less your friend."

What a different man he was from George Vanderware! Even Nathalie could see that. The one all selfishness, the other all generosity.

And so the weeks went on and on again. Nathalie made the best of her exile, and learnt to esteem Mr. Hammond more and more. His behaviour to her now was quite that of a brother, and she was at ease. How she longed to hear from home could never be told, save by those who have been banished from it as she was. The old Shropshire homestead and the dear old faces in it were rarely absent from her mind. Her mother's face, Royal's, even her poor dog, Shag. Shag, ugly in name and in self: it was Roy who had named him so, despite Nathalie's protestations. Ay, and she thought all too often of another homestead, not far removed from their own; but a stone's-throw, as it were. A home in which *she* had once thought to reign as mistress; but in which another woman had superseded her. George Vanderware had done it in passion, it was true; smarting under Nathalie's refusal to go counter to her mother, he had rushed off and married that other one in hasty anger, while his whole soul was Nathalie's; but it was nevertheless an irrevocable fact that that other was his wife, and that she, his first and only love, was separated from him for ever. Oh, if she could but forget him!

How the time went by Nathalie hardly knew, but considerably more than twelve months had elapsed since their settlement in the new place and the opening of Mr. Tayler's store. One day Richard Hammond entered the room where Nathalie was sitting, walked up softly behind her chair, and surprised her by a handful of letters and papers showered into her lap. She turned quickly, smiling up at him.

"A mail has just come in, Nathalie, and you have more than your share of good luck, I think," he said, gaily. "Three letters! while I have but one."

She noticed the seal of that one was unbroken. He had brought hers before stopping to open his own. She made him sit down, and he obeyed readily enough, giving about five minutes' attention to his own letter, and after that watching Nathalie as she bent eagerly over the written pages, her eyes misty with happy tears as she read the loving words in Roy's familiar hand. How "they were both well and getting on well at home, but the house was miserable without Nathalie. They missed her every day of their lives, and every hour of the day; and he knew that mother would give everything she had in the world to have her one girl back again. The servants were always saying it was lonesome. As for himself, if Nathalie did not return soon, he should be under the necessity of coming to the Bend after her: unless—" here

the words were underscored—"unless she had found somebody out there she liked better than "Roy."

"It is like him; like Roy my darling!" she said, the happy smile still on her lips as she replaced the letter in its envelope and proceeded to read the others. One was from her mother; the other from a girl friend and neighbour, an old schoolfellow. The last was a long letter, containing evidently a whole budget of piquant news; such as we like to write to an absent one far away. Richard Hammond sat watching Nathalie as she read; not from any sense of curiosity, but because her face was a pleasant study to him always. Watching it now, he saw how all the transient brightness went out of it suddenly, leaving only pallor and weariness, and something beside that made him long to take her into his arms and comfort her. But she did not look at him; only turned a little more towards the window, almost as though she needed more light. He did not see—how should he?—that one item in the pages of gossip was read and re-read. Just a postscript at the end; a few words on the last page of the sheet; but to her they outweighed all the rest. "I quite forgot to tell you, Nathalie, that George Vanderware's wife has a baby; the sweetest little boy you ever saw, with George's own blue eyes: and George is as proud of it as if it were a young peacock."

Yes, proud and happy, rejoicing, as a young father should rejoice, at the birth of his first-born; while she—well, her idol was down from its pedestal at last, and what was there left for her? What is there left for any of us when the things in which we have trusted fail us, and we stand with empty hands, looking out afar through the coming years to the one quiet haven which awaits us all at the end? Nathalie would not have had it otherwise: but the inward pain was sharp.

And if Richard Hammond, his eyes sharpened by love, guessed that something in this letter had woefully tried her, he made no sign. There was an added shade of tenderness in his voice when he spoke to her, a little more care for her comfort; though she hardly noticed it in the strange restlessness that lay upon her, and which seemed to have taken possession of her mind and body. She did not care to think. She could not be still anywhere. She sang for Mrs. Tayler the cherished old songs of home; she read aloud to Mr. Tayler in the evenings; she played chess with Mr. Hammond, and flashed witty little speeches at them all. She rearranged her cabinet of minerals and fossils, collected for her by the workmen after they found she had a taste for such things; she contrived presents for the poor little Larkins children, eight of them, who lived in one of the new houses; and altogether talked and laughed and worked with a feverish energy that troubled Mr. Hammond. Mrs. Tayler thought the pleasant and long-waited-for home news had done it all: he alone saw that it was fictitious, and foresaw the reaction that must follow on this fever of the spirit—a time

when the overwrought system would take sure revenge for the strain put upon it now.

But the emotional phase gradually subsided, and Nathalie felt more peace, more calm serenity than she had known since the trouble caused by George Vanderware. Nature and time had been reasserting their influence and brought healing on their wings.

The "time of singing birds was on the land," and spring's tender green gladdened hillside and valley, when a little party of four drove down one sunny afternoon to the lower mill, five miles distant. The expedition had been proposed by Richard Hammond: everything was looking so lovely, he remarked. He drove Nathalie in his own open carriage—a nondescript vehicle at best—but its horses were fine and strong. Mr. and Mrs. Tayler drove together in another. They started at two o'clock. It would be just a pleasant, leisurely afternoon's drive, with plenty of time to go over the mill if they liked, and return by sundown.

But before that drive was over—for they took their time, none of them having cause to hurry, and diverged here, and diverged there in the sweet sunshine—dark clouds were seen rolling up from the west rolling up swiftly and warningly; and they all, experienced now in the signs of the skies they lived under, saw that a heavy storm of rain was at hand. The wiser plan would perhaps have been to turn back at once and drive home under the first of the rain: but who was to foresee the necessity for it, or the unusual storm this was to be.

They had barely reached the shelter of the mill when it came—dashing, driving, pouring. Water in sheets, water in torrents, water coming down in rivers from the hills. It was the hardest storm that anyone at the Bend had ever seen, and, considering its violence, the longest, lasting two hours and forty minutes by Mr. Hammond's watch. Long before it was over he was watching the rapid rise of the river, which grew wider and deeper and swifter with every succeeding moment from the great volume of water coming into it above. The storm had evidently been terrific there, too, for the water was dark and muddy, with logs and broken boughs, and even large branches of trees floating on it. What if the bridge above should be swept away—the bridge which they must recross to reach home? There was danger of it; for a tree top floating on this high water would carry off framework and timbers as if they were straws.

Mr. Hammond spoke out his fears of such a possibility; and suggested that they should return at once. All were eager to do so, and the horses were put to by the men.

"There may be no time to lose," remarked Richard Hammond. "But you and Mrs. Tayler will be wet through, Nathalie. I wonder if the men could find you some waterproofs?"

The workmen came eagerly to the rescue: how willing we all are to help one another in these adopted lands! They brought waterproof wraps in plenty, and the party started on the return journey, Mr. Tayler and his wife in advance.

It was slow driving against the wind and over rough roads, the rain driving into the horses' eyes and impeding their progress; so it was quite dark when they reached the place near home, where the bridge ought to be. It was there, all right; and, better still, Mr. Hammond's boy Tim with a lantern, waiting to light them across. For night reigned now. That was a brilliant idea of Tim's; and Mr. Tayler, who was the length of the bridge ahead of the other team, said so to his wife, and that he would give Tim some goodies from his store to-morrow.

"It's an awful night, Tim, my lad, and we might have driven off in the dark into the water if it hadn't been for your lantern.

"That's what I was afraid of, sir. My! haven't it been an everlasting storm! Where's the master, sir?"

"Coming on," answered Mr. Tayler: and they all looked back, to see Mr. Hammond's team half-way across the bridge, himself and Miss Bruner in it. At that moment some dark object loomed suddenly and swiftly into view above the bridge. There was a dull crash, and all was over. Where the bridge had been, nothing remained but a black stretch of water.

The lantern dropped from poor Tim's shaking hand, and he cowered down, silent in his great terror; while Mrs. Tayler uttered shriek after shriek that brought a hundred people rushing up. They had collected there, to look at the waters and watch for the safe return of the travellers, especially for their favourite, Miss Bruner. Seeing what had happened, they stood with blanched faces, looking out into the darkness and trying to discern the floating wreck. Two or three hundred yards down the stream, bridge and fallen tree had lodged together on some obstruction that swayed under the force of that awful current, threatening every minute to go over.

There was no hope of rescue. The strongest boat ever launched could not live five minutes in that stream, filled as it was with floating logs and tree-tops. And the watchers standing there said, "They can never come out of this alive."

But one did come out alive—how, he never really knew, only that the horses kicked themselves free somehow and struggled to land, dragging him with them. It was Richard Hammond. The poor brutes stood there trembling in every limb. But where was Nathalie?

No flutter of white handkerchief, no wave of woman's garments could be seen, to tell that she stood on a half-submerged branch, swaying up and down with every wash of the waters against her frail support. But there she was. The same friendly help that had caught the bridge, had

caught her. Her hands were cold and numb, her garments wet and clinging. She had tried once to cry out and make some one hear, but the rush and roar deadened the sound of her voice, and the water washed up to her waist, chilling her to the heart. After that one sharp cry for help, that first, instinctive, shuddering recoil, which all mortality must feel at the near and sudden approach of death, Nathalie Bruner grew quiet, silent, calm.

I know it is one thing to weary of life, and another to give it up when it is asked for. But I tell you truly that this woman was almost content to go. She had suffered so much, poor thing, in the past year or two, that she, over and over again, had longed for death, if it should be God's will. She prayed to God to pardon her now for Christ's sake, to remember her sufferings, and not her sins, and to take her to Him without pain. Death was upon her; rest was near: for her feet were already touching the borders of that land

"Where the cock never crew,
Where the rain never fell, and the wind never blew."

The silent land.

But, while Nathalie thus waited, lights flashed along the bank, and voices came faintly to her across the black waste of waters. To what use, she wondered. They could not reach her. She had done with these things and with the world for ever.

Heaven knew what tender memories of home came to her. Only Heaven knew how the sick heart had pined through weary months for one sight of home, for one smile of kindred. And during the greater part of that time for one who had been dearer than all the rest.

It was no sin to think of him again in this closing hour, and with a lingering tenderness that had in it none of the old passionate pain. He had loved her truly once. It was right that he should love his wife now: oh, right and well and good. She would have liked to see his child once, to hold it in her arms one moment—the little babe that had its father's eyes, the child that should have been hers. But *that* thought she had put away for ever: there was no bitterness in it now.

How the water surged about her, the black, engulphing water that rocked and swayed the support to which she clung. Oh! it was pitiful! to die like this, alone, in the dark! The branch on which she stood swung lower and lower; still lower, and the chilled hands let go their hold suddenly. The swift current caught breath, sense, life away. And when the moon shone through a rift in the clouds its light fell on a white, upturned face, and drenched garments floating with the tangled driftwood.

Sad sight for a man to see!—sad sight for a lover! Sad sight for Richard Hammond, struggling desperately to reach the stranded wreck, to come upon. How he had accomplished it, he knew not. Here he was, and had reached her through the flood; but the mute lips did not

smile at his coming. He gathered her into his arms, pushing the wet hair out of her face—the fine, reddish brown hair that George Vanderware had praised so many times. It lay against a truer heart now than George Vanderware's had ever been. But little *she* recked of the difference.

Richard Hammond turned toward the bank, waving his hand three times. By the light of the bonfires that had been kindled along shore, the men standing there saw the signal, and began instantly to draw in the rope, swiftly, steadily, silently. And steadily and cautiously he came on, his pallid burden clasped safely in his arms.

Strong hands received both at the bank, friendly faces pressed nearer and nearer; but a hush like the stillness of death fell upon the crowd of men and women at the sight of that white, *white* face.

"I don't think she's dead," said Richard Hammond: and fell down himself in a fit of exhaustion.

Very gently they lifted Nathalie and bore her to her home and Mrs. Tayler; and then they looked after the brave man who had risked his life to rescue her.

A gleam of light in the midst of utter darkness; a grateful warmth; a vague, dreamy sense of rest and quiet. By-and-by a broader light; faint gleams of colour; figures gliding mistily to and fro; the sound of low voices; a picture on the wall; lamps burning on the table in a familiar room; one face distinct among all else—and then Nathalie knew that she had awakened on *this* side of Eternity.

The face came near and bent over her. She knew it, and spoke feebly.

"Mr. Hammond!"

"Nathalie!"

He said nothing else. He could not. But he bent down and kissed her once; a long, long kiss; then stepped aside, and yielded his place to Mrs. Tayler.

Nathalie's eyes followed him, and when they lost sight of him she was conscious that Mrs. Tayler was speaking to her.

"You are safe now, my dear. And it is to Mr. Hammond, next to Heaven, that you owe your life. If ever there was a brave man in this world, it is he. It was like going into the very jaws of death to venture through that flood to the wreck—and we all felt so sure that you were not there. It seemed impossible, you know, that you could have lived to reach it. But Mr. Hammond said there was a chance, and on that chance he was willing to risk his life."

"And—he—did it?"

"Yes, dear, he did it. He brought you through all the peril of the roar and whirl of the waters safe to shore."

What was it that awoke suddenly to life in Nathalie Bruner's heart?

Gratitude? That might be, but it was hardly gratitude that made her thrill yet at that one touch of his lips. He was good, and he loved her. He had told her so, and *his* word was to be depended on. He had saved her life, too. Some hours back she might not have considered that any special kindness; but things looked different now. She would thank him in the morning—not now—she was so tired, so weak. And with his name on her lips, she dropped to sleep.

Does the reader believe in the sudden change?—the sudden awaking? Perhaps not: but it was true. There never yet was line or plummet that could sound all the depths of a tender woman's heart. And Nathalie was a true and tender woman, truer than most. George Vanderware knew that. But *his* hold had slipped off her for ever. The old love with its glow and its gloom was dead. It had long been fading, and now it was utterly gone—buried fathoms deep beneath the black waters that had engulphed her last night; and before her were a *new* heaven and a *new* earth, even for this world.

Morning brought all the world thronging to Mr. Tayler's door. Mrs. Tayler was obliged to repeat for the fortieth time that Miss Bruner was "getting on very well, though not quite strong enough yet to see friends. An awful shock, you know." But to Mr. Hammond she spoke differently.

"Nathalie is up, and in the dining-room, and I am sure she'll see *you*."

He paused an instant at the open door, irresolute. It seemed like intrusion to enter where all others were excluded. But at the first sound of his footfall Nathalie looked up, extending a hand in welcome. How pretty she looked! Wrapped in a soft white woollen shawl, and with a soft pink flush tingeing her cheeks again!

"I owe it to you that my name is still written among the living." She said it as solemnly as she had ever uttered a prayer. "A month or two ago I might not have been sincerely grateful to anyone who should do me such a service. But this morning I feel glad to live, and I thank you from my heart."

What new expression did he see in the steadfast brown eyes, that set his heart a-thrilling? An expression that gave him courage to repeat once more the words he had thought never to say again to any woman—even to her. Pleasant words they were to Nathalie, listening with a sweet, new thrill at her heart.

"You do really care for me, Richard?" she asked, by-and-by, when Mr. Hammond's eloquence was exhausted. "You would never have gone away and forgotten me?"

"Never."

"Ah, no. *You* would not have got in a passion with me, and gone off and married another forthwith."

"No, my dear, I never should. But why do you say this?"

"Because—another did."

"I guessed something of this, Nathalie."

"You did? And still you cared for me?"

"I did. And still I loved you."

"Wait until you hear the tale. I give you back all you have said, until you shall have heard it. It may be that you will not think it right to care for me then."

Richard Hammond smiled, and gathered her close to him while it was told. She concealed nothing: telling him especially how passionately and truly and lastingly she had loved George Vanderware.

"But you do not love him now, my birdie; and ——"

"No, Heaven knows I do not," she interrupted. "Were George Vanderware free to-morrow and came out here to woo me again, I should refuse him. When once your love for a man is gone, it can never be recalled or renewed."

"You did not hear me out, Nathalie. Neither to George Vanderware nor to anyone else will I resign you. Your love is now mine: and, my darling, next month must see you my wife."

"Next month! Oh, Richard!"

"It must be, Nathalie. I have to go home. Don't start, my dear. I have known for some little time that I must go to more important work, for my chief man, Delves, can now do well what I have inaugurated here. I held back, Nathalie, because of you. I could not bear to leave you. And now I shall do what I hardly dared to hope—take you with me. You will like to go home again to the dear old country."

Nathalie Bruner sat with clasped hands and a hectic flush of joy on her cheeks, a light in her speaking eyes. It seemed too good to be true.

Mrs. Tayler had to be appeased yet. She was perfectly agreeable to the marriage; but not to lose Nathalie. To lose them both! It was too much. And she would have had her husband sell off his store and his stock, and take ship for home also. But he would not hear of it.

"No, no, wife. I am coining money, and that's the truth; and some two or three years more of it will send us home, rich for life. You shall go then. You and I are but in the prime of life: we shall have plenty of years to enjoy ourselves, Heaven willing, after that.

Four or five weeks later, they all went to San Francisco for the wedding. Mrs. Tayler to take care of Nathalie; Mr. Tayler to see the place and to lay in a fresh stock of goods—which hitherto he had been obliged to trust others to buy. Nathalie found no trouble in procuring an outfit. San Francisco is not out of the world, you know, and bridal robes and bridal garniture are in demand, even on the Pacific coast. And Richard Hammond was so good for them all. There

never was another man like Richard. So the bride-elect thought; and so said Mr. and Mrs. Tayler.

And, a very short while after, when the wedding was over, the young wife endorsed it with a fervour of love and trust, as she stood on the deck of the magnificent passenger steam-ship, watching the shores of California recede. The tears were in her eyes: there had been some hardships, many strange experiences; but on the whole (putting Richard aside) she had been not unhappy.

"We are homeward bound at last, little wife," he whispered, drawing her shawl around her.

"Oh yes, Richard, and with you!" was the answer. "What happiness!"

Home! She thought it would be like Eden to see it once more; to see the apple-trees still shed their blossoms down, and the pink hollyhocks bloom by the fence. She wondered whether Shag, the faithful, was still in the land of the living, and would remember her, and what her mother and Roy would say when they saw her.

No notice had been sent of their coming. It will be so delightful to take them by surprise, said Nathalie. And the good ship made a quick and excellent voyage.

Without the loss of a moment they, on landing, went on to Shropshire, and took a fly at the station nearest home. As they drove up to the gate, the last picture, which Nathalie had carried away in her mind, came rushing back to it unbidden. It had her mother and George Vanderware for its foreground; and a throb of the old aching pain returned for a moment to her heart. *The pain only:* not the love or the regret for George Vanderware. As her husband handed her from the fly, he saw how pale she was, and clasped her hand to reassure her.

"Who is this?" he asked.

A very tall and fine young man, his features bronzed and brown under his straw hat, was walking down the path from the house, wondering no doubt what visitors were arriving with all that luggage. Nathalie sprang towards him with a cry.

"Roy! Roy!"

"Well, I never!" cried Roy Bruner, cool always, as he kissed her again and again. "Is it my dear little run-a-gate sister? I thought she would come back to us sometime. And—this—gentleman?" added the young fellow, with hesitation, as he lifted his straw hat.

"It is my husband, Roy. No girl ever had so good a one yet. He saved my life and then he married me. And—where's my mother?"

"Very much occupied just now with company," was the answer. But there was a significance in Leroy Bruner's tone when he gave it which struck his sister.

"What company?" she hastily asked.

"Our neighbours, George Vanderware and his wife."

"George Vanderware!" she repeated, but without any emotion. "Are he and mamma friendly?"

"Oh dear, yes. They made up their differences that afternoon when I was driving you to Ludlow, Nathalie; and since then they have been on neighbourly terms. Mr. and Mrs. Vanderware have come in this afternoon by special invitation to drink tea."

"And the baby, too?"

"As if she could stir anywhere without that prize baby!" retorted Roy, lightly, a trouble that had haunted his mind disappearing from that moment. "Come in, Nathalie; and you—sir. She has not given me any name yet."

"It is Richard Hammond," was that gentleman's laughing answer, as he and his brother-in-law clasped hands. "Is this Shag, Nathalie?"

Shag it was; wild with delight, leaping and capering like a crazy thing.

With her husband on one side and Roy on the other, and Shag barking in advance, Nathalie walked up the path. The path along which she had once fled for more than life—from George Vanderware's love and from herself. It was not the Nathalie of those troubled days, but a brighter, happier woman who stepped over the threshold now with a lithe, buoyant step; who caught her mother round the neck and kissed her; who gave her hand first to Mrs. Vanderware and afterwards to George, and took the babe unhesitatingly to her bosom. The child smiled up in her face with its father's eyes, so like, so like; but those eyes had no power to charm her now. She smoothed the silky hair on the half-bare little head, whispering soft, cooing baby talk; while George Vanderware watched her with a half-trembling eagerness, looking from one to the other, from his wife, with her hard, loud beauty, to this sweet girl he had lost; and who might have been his but for his own passionate anger.

"Have you come home to stay, Nathalie?" asked Mrs. Bruner.

"To stay for one or two weeks, mother dear. But my husband's home will have to be in London. I will come down and see you as often as Richard will let me."

Richard smiled as he caught her eye. And George Vanderware, watching the glance and detecting the mutual love and trust, went out abruptly. For, as it must be one of the keenest torments of a lost soul to remember that there was a time when heaven was possible, so is it to know that we have marred our own life's best happiness. From henceforth they must walk in widely diverging ways, those two, who once hoped to be one. And in this moment the knowledge was cruelly bitter to George Vanderware.

THE END.

FACT AND FANCY.

BROWNING'S lover questions of the poet,
Does he come more near his own sublime--
Bartering health, and wealth, and life's best treasures —
Than the man who ne'er has turned a rhyme :
Hints that to a common country maiden,
Living, breathing, we should look aside
From the sculptor's matchless Aphrodite,
Of a score years' work the crown and pride.

And it may be so with some ; I care not ;
Take the pretty rustic, he who will,
Give me the twenty years of glad endeavour,
Though the hand may scarce the thought fulfil,
And the Venus but suggest the beauty
Of her model in the artist's brain ;
That beauty doubtless is as real a treasure
As the charms the captive's soul enchain ;

And more lasting far : for fleshly beauty
Fades as fades the flesh, but fancy keeps
Her creations in undying splendour,
Shrouded only while she idly sleeps.
Yes, the poet answers with contentment,—
Keep your silver stores and rugged health ;
All my pulses thrill to powers more subtle,
" All my soul is steeped in richer wealth."

Fact or fancy—which then is the sweeter?
Sweet love's rosy kiss, but love may pale ;
While in *dreams* of answering hearts united,
Not less sweet, fair faith can never fail ;
Never in these dreams the smiles of childhood
Freeze into the cautious glance of age ;
Never friendship cools, nor barren desert
Is a long life's only heritage :

Never golden hopes of happy spring-time
Drop to earth in desolate decay,
Nor damp vapours of a cloudy evening
Quench the promise of the early day.
Joyous dreams ! within your fairy circle
Reddest roses bloom without a thorn ;
Peace and plenty reign throughout your kingdom ;
Strife and want and sorrow are earth-born.

Empty dreams, you call them. *Are* they empty?
Is our " own sublime " a foolish boast,
An airy nothing, fleeting as the mirage
On some burning plain, of breezy coast?
Those who look athwart the marble Venus
To the buxom " girl who fords the burn "
Miss the magic of imagination ;
Have her closest secrets yet to learn.

And her secrets—oh! their faintest whisper
Is as music in her votaries' ear;
Outward sounds are hushed beneath her breathing;
Storm and tumult cease when she is near.
Hers the key to mysteries that baffle
Stern philosopher and grey-haired sage;
Hers the hand that can unclasp the volume
Where the heart's blood letters every page.

Rigid fact marks care and disappointment;
Fancy blesses all things as she goes;
Like a buoyant stream of crystal water,
Decks the stony track o'er which she flows
With a life and beauty else it knew not;
Crimson blossoms laugh along its brink,
Jewelled fishes flash below the surface;
Birds of rainbow plumage stoop to drink.

Still the sharp-edged rocks are there, you tell me,
Murderous pike rove free beneath the wave,
On the slimy bank the frogs are croaking,
Each poor minnow is a life to save.
All the greater need, I answer boldly,
For the sparkling spray and flaming flow'r;
O'er the fighting foe to flaunt the banner:
Midst grave fact to yield to fancy's pow'r.

And her power I surely have disparaged,
Painting her in colours all too gay;
Sunshine were less fair without its shadows;
Touch of sadness tunes the sweetest lay.
And bright fancy has her tearful moments,
Only every tear reflects the light;
All the tender tints of dying evening
But suggest the glittering stars of night.

When she hears the tramping of the soldiers
Marching on to triumph or the grave,
Loud she sounds the trumpet of their honour,
Lifts her arm to crown, but not to save.
O'er the bloody field the flag is flying;
With its ev'ry fold her breast heaves high:
What of deadly sword-thrust; trampled bodies!
Glory! glory! thunders to the sky.

* * * * *

Browning, let the poet tell your lover—
Lover never loved more true than he;
Every love is centred in the poet;
Deep his bosom as the soundless sea.
Fact, the landscape lying cold around us;
Fancy is the morning's ruby ray
Touching point by point with fiery finger,
Burning through and through the sober grey.

EMMA RHODES.

ROSERL.

An Alpine Scene.

MOUNTAIN on mountain rising one behind the other, most of them starting out of dark forests, in wild, fantastic forms; some, skirted at the bottom by woods and fields, crowned with the bare stone fir, its outline sharply drawn against the blue sky, presenting to view a gradual cessation of vegetation. Large extents of grassy ground lying between the rocky and woody chaos, hidden and unsuspected: though, did not the little white Alm huts, peeping out here and there, and occasionally the sound of the cowbells, betray their existence? To complete the picture, a glimpse of the row of glaciers in the background.

On one of these softly-turfed, wood-bound, rock-adorned Alms stood Roserl's sennerhütte, looking down from its lofty position into Bavaria on one side, on the other into Tyrol. The small, whitewashed hut with its brown door and glistening window; the wooden loft above, under the overhanging roof of shingles, the latter kept down by weighty stones, placed in regular rows upon them; with its adjoining cow-house, presented altogether a most picturesque aspect. And climbing round and round those rugged rocks, following the narrow, well-trodden path, one might approach the hut and behold the fair inmate of that airy summer residence, Roserl herself.

Hiller's Roserl is the fairest girl of the village, nay, of the whole neighbourhood. The opinion of the younger men, however, is divided between Hiller's Roserl and the Mossbauern Feferl; but the elder men, whose judgment may be taken as less biassed, and even the women, declare Roserl's charms perfection, and give her the credit of being the belle on the Alm. So, I think, we may fully justify our own assertion.

Hiller's Roserl need not have gone up as "sennerin" if she had had no mind to do so. She was an only child. Her father could spare a thousand florins and be none the poorer; her mother had a huge wardrobe, well-stocked with snow-white, self-spun linen, to which every winter saw a considerable addition; a handsome bedstead with overflowing feather beds, and silk coverlets, all in flounced cases; a goodly number of different-coloured neckerchiefs and aprons; a dozen heavy silver spoons; a necklace of twelve rows of silver chains, united by an immense clasp, and other trinkets—all ready for Roserl, whenever she chose to transfer her beautiful self from her paternal roof to that of a husband.

Roserl, although she could have afforded to send a maid with the cows, preferred, as all girls in the Alps do, to go up herself. On no account would she have missed her "sommerfrische."

Long and dreary enough were the winter months in the narrow homes below, when the girls were left to their own resources; the boys being away in the forests, often in very distant places.

When summer work is ended, and snow has covered their fields, the young peasants leave home to look out for winter occupation as woodmen in the imperial or royal forests, taking their unemployed horses or oxen with them.

In the mountains, the felling of the trees, the logging and sledging of the timber, is attended with great danger—more so than any other profession, and yet there is no other occupation so much to the young peasant's liking. There is something inspiriting, highly pleasant, in a work so manly, calling forth so much strength and dauntlessness. There is but one thing placed higher in the Alpine youth's estimation than that kind of forest work—wild-hunting.

The "wildern," though scarcely more dangerous, is still more exciting. And there are few—we may without risk say none; at least, none possessing bodily vigour—who have not tried their hand at it. Not everyone, of course, is lucky enough to become a regular wildschutz by profession, to attain to fame in that line being the terror (and the boast at the same time) of the neighbourhood, and the trouble of the forester.

Most of the youths are kept down to a certain limit in the game of wildern, and home influence often induces them to give it up early, confining themselves to an occasional shot here and there.

Well, in winter, when the boys lead their isolated and laborious life in the woods, and only occasionally appear to catch a glimpse of home, the girls have a rather dull time of it; and no wonder they greet the returning spring and the fair prospect of coming summer joys with ecstasy.

Pretty Roserl had been as eager as any of the maidens to take her fly upwards, and surely her life on the Alm was all enjoyment. Roserl, we are sorry to say, was as great a flirt as she was pretty; and what wonder?—and where the evil? No evil until *now*.

Roserl stood leaning against the doorpost of the stable-gate, singing a pretty ländler, and patting the necks of her cows, calling them caressingly by their names, as they trotted past her into the stable. By a look at the sinking sun—clock she had none—she had ascertained that it was time, and stepping upon an elevated rock near her hut, had put a hand on each side of her mouth and uttered her yodler—a call consisting of a succession of notes, the peculiar call in the Alps. A minute afterwards, one would hear the harmonious sound of the tinkling

cowbells as the stragglers assembled, and then, in a long line, following one another steadily and orderly, wound their way round to their night quarters.

Sometimes, in hot weather, the cows sleep out; but when thunderstorms become frequent, the Almerin thinks it safer to see them in before nightfall.

Roserl's stables were a mere shed, just a shelter. The wide gates remained open, besides every shutter and air-hole in the roof, to make it pleasanter to the cows.

Hiller's Roserl would have been a pretty girl in any dress, but surely none could have set off her figure to more advantage than her picturesque national costume.

Her well-formed feet were dressed in a pair of black shoes and white stockings, the spotless purity of which could only be accounted for by the total absence of dust on the green Alm. Sometimes, when the girl gave herself a sudden swing, you could catch a glimpse of the bow of scarlet silk ribbon which was tied as garters under her knees; but usually her skirt, though short enough, did not display more than a considerable portion of the white, well-fitting stocking. The skirt was made of a gay print, well-starched and ironed, worn over some ample petticoats of the same material. A white muslin apron covered the whole front part of the dress, tied round her waist by scarlet ribbon with long flying ends. Her black velvet bodice, laced in front with a silver chain, fitted very tightly round her slender waist, but allowed full development to her bust. It was low and sleeveless, worn over a shirt of coarse but snow-white linen, reaching nearly up to her throat, which was encircled by a quantity of loose rows of coral beads, fastened behind with a heavy gold clasp. The short puffy sleeves, bordered by a bit of embroidery, left her round, sunburnt arms entirely bare. Two immense plaits of glossy brown hair were fastened to her head by large silver pins; and a small green felt hat with a golden tassel, sitting coquettishly on one side of her head, gave to the whole costume its peculiar character.

But under the tasselled hat, and framed into these soft rich plaits, was a face of pure style, the regularity of whose features was set off by a tender complexion of clear red and white; by coral lips and pearly teeth, always ready to greet you with a bright, sunny smile; and a pair of such eyes! Her eyes were blue, deep blue, with a soft tenderness in the glance, but apt to take all hues and expressions, changing with every movement of her soul.

This evening, when Roserl had attended to the cows and finished her day's work in the dairy, she put on a fresh muslin apron, took up her white knitting, and stepped out on to a jutting point from whence she could command a view into two different realms. The boundary between Bavaria and Austria is evidenced by a sort of road cut

through the forest, over the hills, through the dales, across the rivers, without the least regard to any accident of the soil.

Roserl stood with her back against a massive rock, knitting away with magical swiftness, and singing with a fresh, clear, and thrilling voice. Roserl was seldom silent: if she did not talk she must sing. The woe and weal of her young life from earliest childhood upwards had been expressed in song.

As she stood there, she might have presented the picture of calm, self-possessed complacency, had it not been for her eyes, which wandered down the hill in all directions, turning rather restlessly from one object to another; and that now and then a smile suddenly brightened up her face, or a shadow crossed her brow. Sometimes she would interrupt her song and stop her knitting, and attentively listen to a distant noise—the cracking of the branches in the forest below, the rustling of the wind, or the flutter of a bird; and then, with a sigh of disappointment, resume her occupation. Did Roserl expect anyone?

The day had been sultry, but now light gusts of wind blew refreshingly over the Alm, and made every grass-blade tremble with delightful anticipation of coming rain.

Vivid flashes of light darted up and down the extended horizon.

Suddenly a shrill note broke upon the silence, followed by shouts—a regular, long-drawn yodler was sent up to the Alm from below.

Roserl started; her stocking fell from her hands. She drew herself up; you would have thought the girl was developing into fuller and stronger bloom. She answered the call from below. Her notes had not died away, when another shout, a wild, gay, frantically happy shout, was heard somewhat nearer than the first.

Roserl pressed her hands to her bosom; she was pale with emotion. "Franzl!" she whispered to herself; then suddenly, her face all aglow, she clapped her hands joyfully, and repeated, aloud, "Franzl! Franzl!"

A few seconds after this, the form of a young man emerged from the forest, and came bounding upwards, from rock to rock, with the speed and gracefulness of a chamois.

A tall, well-proportioned figure, with a fine manly head, adorned with a profusion of short raven locks, a healthy brown hue on the face, a splendid moustache, parted on each side, setting off a straight nose, and showing a handsome mouth, round whose corners an expression of good-humour lingered at any time, but whose lips now were parted with breathless joy. A pair of the darkest of dark eyes sent their flashing glance up the height.

He wore a green felt hat, with a bunch of artificial flowers, to which some sprigs of a forest tree, plucked in coming up, were added; a loose grey jacket over a green waistcoat; the shirt lightly held together by a small black kerchief; breeches of black chamois leather, which reached

to the knees, the latter remaining bare; grey worsted leggings, with a green border, and leather shoes with a double range of nails around the sole.

Juchée! Juch! cried Franzl, as with a desperate leap he cleared the last distance that separated him from his Dirnl; and alighting on the rock at Roserl's side, he waved his hat in the air.

The girl had given a little shriek at the daring jump. And now the little dissembler looked over her shoulder coquettishly up into the youth's face, and said, playfully, "Ah—it is thee!—I thought it was Hansel."

"Hansel, indeed!" he answered, laughing; "didst expect Hansel?—wouldst have preferred it to be Hansel?"

"I might have waited for Hansel, as well as for thee—mightn't I?"

"*He* wouldn't have brought thee what *I* have. Look here," holding a bunch of white velvety flowers to her.

"Edelweis!" cried Roserl, delighted.

"Ay, and from the semmering too. I have brought them all the way for thee."

"Ah, thou hast been target-shooting in Styria. Of course; I remember, thou didst tell me—but I did not quite believe thee," with a touch of self-reproach. "I thought it was a joke to tease me."

"Where didst thou think I could be all the time—not coming to see thee?"

"I wondered," said she, confused and blushing, busying herself with fixing the bouquet to her bodice. "And what hast thou done at the target, Franzl?" she asked, suddenly looking up again.

"Won that!" he said, taking out of his pocket a silver medal. "Juchée, it was glorious fun!" and he pirouetted on his heel with astounding dexterity, singing and waving his hat.

"Well, now!" said Roserl, "there will be no end of conceit after that."

"No, Roserl!" said he, turning and seizing her hand. "Thou knowest I don't care a straw for anything, or anyone—except—thou knowest whom. If I but win thee——"

"O no!—thou thinkest thyself the only fair boy in the world, eh?" Roserl went on, jokingly, leaving her hand in his grasp, and looking mischievously into his dark eyes.

"I don't care how many boys there may be," cried Franzl: "but there is but one Dirnl, one Roserl, in the world for me." And with that he seized her round the waist, and with a loud shout of "Juchée!" lifted her from the ground, and swung her around him in a whirl.

How the two managed to keep on the little plateau, which was hardly wide enough to hold one quiet, sober person, I don't know.

Franzl put Roserl on the ground again, but before releasing her, he pressed his lips to her cheek with such heartiness, that you might almost have heard it resound from hill to hill.

But a slap on his cheek, not less hearty, to waken the echoes again, rewarded his audacity.

The angry expression of Roserl's face, the indignation flashing in her eyes, did not lessen her beauty; and when she said, "Oh, thou good-for-nothing, thou rascal, get thee out of my sight!" he seemed not in the least willing to obey the command. He sat down on a projecting rock on the edge of the precipice, and laughed.

Roserl stood turned from him, struggling hard to keep her dignity, until Franzl changed his tone, and rubbed his cheek dolefully.

Then her repressed merriment broke forth. "Serve thee right," cried she, with a burst of laughter, patting the ill-used cheek with her small sunburnt hand, smiling saucily, and coquettishly bringing her rosy face so provokingly near to his that he could not help feeling a strong temptation to commit the offence again, whatever might come of it. However, he resisted as a man, liking her present mood too well, to care to change it. He contented himself with looking at the maiden with caressing eyes; there were a thousand kisses in his glance; and the audacious girl played with the dangerous sparks as a child plays with fire.

They were chatting gay nonsense, laughing and singing in turns; he complacently sitting on the bit of rock, she standing by him, not willing to encourage him so far as to sit down beside him, keeping herself the closest possible to his grasp, and still free in her movements. How long the two foolish things went on in this way they did not know, or heed.

"Roserl!" said Franzl, suddenly. He spoke softly, entreatingly, in a half whisper, for fear of rousing her temper. "Roserl!" and he said no more.

Gently, gently, he drew her head towards him, closer and closer, until it rested on his breast; then he laid his arm around her waist, scarcely touching her form, which yielded to the slightest pressure, until it was resting against his throbbing heart. But so lightly he held her, so gently he pressed her, so beseechingly his eyes rested on hers, that the girl's high spirits seemed suddenly subdued. She leant her head against his shoulder, and her sweet eyes met full and frankly an ocean of honest love beaming from his.

The wind blew fiercer over the mountains; the noiseless flashes lighting up the heavy mass of dark clouds, began to find utterance in low growling of distant thunder.

"Roserl!" whispered Franzl, passionately. "My own Roserl!"

There was a strange force in that word "Roserl!" It was worth all the eloquence of a lover's protestation. And Roserl's answer to his appeal was yet simpler: she did not say a word.

But did not her eyes speak volumes?

Franzl had often looked deeply into those beautiful orbs; he was

familiar with every change in their expression; but never had he seen heaven itself in them, opening upon him as he saw it now. She had no need to speak.

"Roserl—my sweet, my own Roserl, thou art surely mine!" Their embrace became closer, until heart beat to heart, lip rested on lip, with fond, passionate clinging.

The glaring flashes of light followed by peals of thunder, the rising hurricane, did not disturb the lovers' rapture. More fondly clinging to each other as the storm approached, they lost all perception of things around them.

A vivid flash, changing for one moment the night into something like brightest moontime, a tremendous thunderclap, and a sudden shower of rain, tore them asunder at last.

Roserl had started first. She felt as one awaking from a dream, and looked ashamed of herself the next moment, then half angry, then something like herself again. Franzl seemed not so willing to be roused from a dream of heavenly bliss; he did not stir at first; then slowly rising, he took Roserl by the hand, and said, solemnly:

"Roserl, thou promised to be my wife?"

"Yes," said she, without the least hesitation.

The shower had not lasted; the wind seemed too high to admit of rain; the heavy drops even were turned away; the black masses of clouds moved rapidly; lightning and thunder continued.

"I forgot my cows!" cried Roserl, in self-reproach, and off she bounded, Franzl following.

They shut the wide gate upon the melancholy bellowing cows, who seemed to complain of neglect, and closed every opening on the weather side.

"The poor beasts must feel it warm in here, I am sure," said Roserl. "I couldn't stop in my room on a stormy night. Ha! what a flash! what thunder! Come up here, Franzl. How it shakes the earth! Here we can best see it. What a spectacle! Hast thou ever seen a more splendid sight? For nothing in the world would I miss my summer's stay on the Alm. Ah see—see!"

"*For nothing in the world?*" cried Franzl, with apprehension. "Oh Roserl, married women do not generally go up as sennerin."

"No—o," said Roserl, and her countenance fell. "I suppose it would not do. But I am not to be a married woman all at once. Surely there is no hurry, Franzl. I don't want to be married for an other year or two—I am so young—we are both young; surely we can wait." This was said so innocently and prettily, with so charming a grace, that Franzl, in spite of his feeling of disappointment, could but reply:

"No; there is no hurry, of course; we need not be married at once but we can fix some future time——"

"Oh, Franzl!" cried Roserl, coaxingly, "thou knowest I am thine, nothing can part us; but there is no hurry to fix the time: it will come round by itself sure enough. In the meantime——"

"Oh, I am happy enough in the prospect of having thee for my wife in some future unknown time," interrupted Franzl. "I will be patient, if I am sure of my prize in the end."

"Of course. I would not marry anyone else in the end."

"But if I am to wait for thee, I must in the meantime see thee often —always."

"Of course!"

"Every day?"

"Twice a day, if thou choosest."

"But, Roserl."

"What, Franzl?"

"When I come thou must receive me kindly."

Roserl laughed.

"Not as thou didst receive me to-day!"

Roserl laughed again. "Poor boy!" Then added, tenderly: "No more cuffs for thee, Franzl."

"Dost thou mean what thou sayest, Roserl?"

"Art thou not my own, my proud, exacting Franzl?" And taking his hand in both hers: "I will always receive thee kindly!"

"With sweet kisses?"

"Oh, the impudence!" cried Roserl, letting his hand fall from her grasp. "No."

"Why not, Roserl? Art thou not mine?"

It might occur to Roserl that she had gone too far in denying every fond caress in the future, and her face happening to be close to his shoulder, he having his arm round her—for fear she might be blown away by the tempest—she managed to whisper in his delighted ear: "I will tell thee one thing. Listen! Thou shalt come to see me every day, I say; I will not take any excuse; and I—I will give thee a kiss at thy coming—and again kiss thee once—*once*, I say—at parting. Dost thou agree to this?" and she released herself from his arm.

"And if I am not agreeable?"

"Then I won't have thee up here at all!"

"If it is so, I must agree, of course. But thou wilt think better of it, my Roserl: thou wilt not be so miserly with thine alms!"

"Yes or no?"

"Thou grantest very little!"

"Yes or no?" growing impatient.

"Before we settle the contract, Roserl, I must have a specimen of those promised two kisses: give me a sample, Roserl."

Roserl laughed and blushed and winced, and after a little struggle she sprang forward, and throwing her arms round his neck, she held her

full cherry lips temptingly up to him. Then she succeeded in extricating herself from his encircling arms, and took her stand a few steps distant from him. She looked blooming, agitated, but happy. "Dost thou agree, Franzl?"

"I think I must," said Franzl, looking at her with hungry eyes. "I fear I must. But, Roserl, thou dost not know——"

"Wilt thou agree?"

"So very little, Roserl!"

"No more!" cried Roserl, her patience fairly worn out. "I know somebody who would be happy if I allowed him to kiss my little finger once in my life!"

"Hansel, of course?"

"*He* wouldn't grumble."

"He cannot love thee as I do."

"Dost imagine so?"

"But it is of no consequence whether he does or does not. He must not come to see thee here, Roserl."

"Must not!" said Roserl, in an aggravated tone.

"What meanest thou, Roserl?"

"That Hansel won't give up coming to see me."

"Unless thou tellest him not to come."

"But I won't tell him that."

"Roserl!"

"I won't!"

"My own Roserl!"

"Well?"

"If thou art to be my wife, thou must as a matter of course give up Hansel."

"But not until I *am* thy wife. In the meantime, I expect to be free to amuse myself as I please."

"But, Roserl, if thou carest for me, thou canst not care for Hansel."

"I care for him just enough to want to see him. He amuses me, he brings life up to the Alm: we couldn't do without Hansel. Every girl envies my seeing so much of him; it is great fun to witness their jealousy!"

Franzl felt perplexed. "But, Roserl," he stammered, "when people once know of our engagement——"

"They won't know. I won't tell them—and I won't have thee tell them. I *will* have my sommerfrische out without being talked about."

"But if Hansel——"

"Isn't it enough that *thou* knowest I love thee best? What does it matter to us what other people think?"

"Hansel and I will meet here; and he, seeing that I come every day, will come every day too," said Franzl, quite bewildered.

"You must both take your chance," quoth the girl, haughtily.

"I cannot understand," said Franzl, pensively, "how thou canst care to see Hansel here ——"

"How?" she interrupted, with animation. "Isn't he the merriest boy hereabouts? A little too wild, perhaps, but the more fun. If I didn't but love another best"—half crying—"an ungrateful wretch, I might well be proud to be chosen by Hansel."

"And in thy estimation there is no merrier youth in the world? Sapperment!"

"Isn't he the best shot hereabouts? the bugbear of the Förster? Thee will never catch Hansel, poor old man, he is too clever!"

"Roserl!" cried Franzl, speaking with emotion, "why dost thou say this? Thou knowest well there are others who can point a shot as sure as Hansel, if not better; and could do, and *have* done, the same exploits as he. Dost thou forget that but for the accident two years ago, when I promised my dying mother never to wildern again, I could outdo Hansel any day?"

"Of course," said the girl, softened, "that was a misfortune, to shoot one's mother's brother nearly dead. He had a narrow escape."

"And, after all, Roserl, it is not respectable to be a wildschütz. It is against the law. Thou oughtest to be glad that thy lover has tried a hand at it to show what he can do, and has given up the dangerous pastime."

"Somehow I can't be glad at that."

"Roserl," hissed Franzl, with a strange huskiness in his voice, "thou couldst almost tempt a man to break his most sacred vow."

"Nobody tempted thee. Did I?"

"It seems the only way to win thy regard. Now, if I were free to outdo Hansel in wild-hunting, thou wouldst not be ashamed to acknowledge thy preference of me!"

There came a pretty little shrug of her shoulder as her doubtful answer.

"If there were a grain of love for me in thy heart ——"

"If thou choosest to doubt it ——" She could not continue; she all but wrestled with her wrath.

They had both managed to work each other into an ungovernable passion.

"Look here," cried Franzl, with sudden determination. His lips were white with suppressed agitation. "What's the use of wrangling? Thou must choose between us; we both cannot court thee. If thou hast chosen me—as I had a right to believe a little while ago—it would not be fair towards him to let him go on losing his time after all."

"Fortunately for Hansel, he doesn't regret his time lost upon *me*," said Roserl. "He would give his life for no more than to see me twenty yards off. Very different from some others."

Franzl took no notice of the last hint, and continued: "Because he hopes still to make thee love him some day. He cannot know that all shame is lost. How can he suspect such double play? Roserl, it is wrong."

But now the girl's hardly-restrained wrath fairly broke out. "What!" screamed she, "teach me wrong or right—darest thou? Now, before we are married! What wouldst thou do after our marriage? Remember," she panted, "we are not man and wife yet: perhaps never shall be. No, no! I won't be tied to ——" Here her voice broke down; her whole frame shook; her eyes flashed in rage; her lips were white and trembling. Was this the same girl who but a few minutes before had nestled lovingly on Franzl's heart? the same sweet eyes so divinely shining into his? the same fond lips upraised to meet his kiss? Ah, me! all that had been a little, very little, while ago. So short had been the time that had wrought the change, that Franzl was bewildered, beyond himself with surprise. Grief, rage, awe, mingled in his breast, found expression in his look.

The weather seemed to rage in common accord with them. Flash after flash, peal after peal, showers of rain in the roaring hurricane. But the two were now beyond noting that they had become wet through.

"What dost thou mean by 'never be'?" cried Franzl.

"That I won't be bound to such a tyrant!"

"Tyrant!" shouted he, above the wind—and stopped to rally his strength. "Mark my words," with great stress, "*thou must give up Hansel or me! I* won't be a traitor towards a friend. I will not suffer *him* to be wronged. Who is it to be—*him* or *me?*"

"Get thee hence, and that instantly!" cried the girl, at the top of her voice; "and mark my words now: *I throw thee off as I do these flowers*—there they go, and all my love for thee departs with them from me—goes with them down to the bottom of the precipice!" Thus saying, she vehemently plucked Franzl's bouquet from her heaving breast, raised her arm high, and flung it far away from her. Down, down it went into the great dark gulf.

A deadly pallor spread over Franzl's face. He sprang to the brink of the precipice. His tone was icy, his teeth chattered, as he replied: "Very well; it won't be more difficult to bring the flowers out of the hole than it was to bring them from the semmering. When I have brought them back again, I will give them to Feferl!"

His words sounded like a death-knell, as he disappeared the way the flowers had gone down before him.

Raging as the elements were around her, the storm raised in Roserl's breast was yet fiercer, and seemed only now to reach its climax, as she, with a heart burning with passion, paced up and down the short space under the overhanging roof of her hut. "The villain! the rascal! the

wretch! the murderer! treat *me* so, and after what had gone before, having betrayed me into confessing my weakness—my love—my mad love for him. But serve me right, goose, idiot that I was, to allow myself to be so overcome as to forget all resolution—to let him see how passionately I was fond of him, ungrateful wretch!" And flinging herself down on the wet threshold of the hut, she lay prostrate on the floor, giving herself up to passionate crying.

The torrents of tears, however, served to calm the impetuosity of her grief. She sobbed on and on, until sobs turned into heavy breathing and heaving, and tears fell abundantly but quietly. Long, long, lay she motionless, and cried—and cried.

In the meantime, the sympathizing weather had reached the pitch of inclemency, and the impetuosity of the storm could not fail to attract her attention in the end. She began to listen to the howling of the wind, the splashing of the rain, peals of thunder which, in their echo from the hills, formed a continued roar. That uproar of the elements seemed in keeping with the feelings of her own tortured breast: it soothed her where nothing else would have brought comfort.

A dreadful thunderbolt close to her, shaking the foundation of the hut, caused her to start from her prostrate position. Her first thought was that the lightning had struck the cowhouse. Erect she stood in an instant, and rushed out to the stables. Nothing seemed the matter there. Her second thought was the precipice, which rocky chaos had several times before been struck and rent by lightning: she could even remember the last time when a new rent had been made in those shaggy cliffs. With a loud shriek she flew to its brink, and endeavoured to look into the depth; a terror-stricken call, which sounded like "Franzl, Franzl," died away in the roar. Surely the girl must have lost her senses, that she did not cry, "Wretch, murderer!"

The streaming rain, however, hid all from view, and blinded her. Clap after clap of thunder, all the horrors of the tempest, were let loose upon her head as she bent down vainly hoping to discern something in the black hole. "If he does not get out soon, he must be drowned. He cannot get out the other way below; it must be flooded; it would be sure death: he knows that." She knew he must come out this way, and what could he do but ask shelter at her hut? Oh, he would do so at anybody's hut, not at hers now—she knew that, too. But if he came near, she would call him in—he would come in, he *must* come in; he could not go a step further in such a storm. Oh, if he but made his appearance! Ha! another clap, so near! The earth shook, a thundering noise followed. An immense rock, not far from Roserl, had been split in two, rent from the ground, and went rolling down the height, disappearing as it dipped into a grey ocean; but heard a long while after, as it rolled from one stone terrace to another, until, far down at the bottom, it reached a cleft wide enough to settle in.

There the two enormous blocks lie now, one a little above the other, and there they will remain for centuries; tourists admiring their fantastic shape and their picturesque position.

The shock had sent Roserl reeling to the ground. She held her head with her two hands, feeling as if she was to be rent asunder next. But as soon as the first fright was overcome, she managed to lift her head and spring to her feet. Franzl was uppermost in her thoughts; she stood at her door ready to receive him; the next minute must bring him. The path out of the rugged depth led close by her hut; he could not have passed; he would have had to stalk over her as she was lying across the path.

Half the night passed; the storm had subsided; a calm, healthful rain was noiselessly falling; Nature seemed weepingly to rest from her travail; and Roserl was still watching for Franzl. If he had been hiding in a cave below, he would be coming now. Patter, patter, rain—no other sound.

Roserl felt wearied out and sick at heart; still, no wish for rest or sleep had she.

At last she left her post, and scarcely knowing what she did, she walked away across the Alm in the direction of another Alm hut. Nannerl was greatly shocked when she heard the violent knocking at her door. She opened, after long hesitation. "Well, Roserl!" she exclaimed, and stood like one petrified at Roserl's pale face. "I feared the guards——"

"Ah! thou hast given refuge from them to a man in thy house. Call him up—call him up at once! I must see him."

Nannerl wanted an explanation, but the impetuosity of Roserl's manner awed her, and she proceeded to the back of the hut, where she put a ladder to the loft, and climbing up, she knocked in a peculiar way upon a board covering the entrance. She had been heard and understood, and retraced her steps. A moment afterwards, a long, sleepy figure, fully dressed, yawning and stretching itself, tumbled down the ladder, alighting at Roserl's feet. "Why, Roserl! what on earth can be the matter?"

"Oh, Hansel, come with me at once! Franzl must have met with an accident in the black hole."

"Not he!"

"But I assure thee he went in before the storm began, and has never come out again."

"Franzl is the last man to remain in the loch. He no doubt got out the other way."

"No, no! I know that loch well: there is but one way out of it, and I have watched it all night."

"But he would find another way. He scrambled over the rocks, I warrant thee."

"He could not: it was flooded," cried Roserl. "The waters came down over the rocks like a waterfall."

"Hm! yes—perhaps so. Well, we can't do anything now. But in the morning I'll fetch the fellows at Feferl's, and we'll search the precipice. But thou needst not trouble: be sure, Franzl has spent the night in his own bed."

Roserl heard no more; she was off to Feferl's. She found Feferl dressed and at her work in the dairy. But although everything indicated her having hidden from the guards some wildschütz, she denied most decidedly having a man in the house, and remained unmoved by Roserl's frantic despair. The fact is, Feferl had her own lover, to whom she was soon to be married, amongst the party she had taken under her protecting wing; and what were all the Franzls of the earth to her, when her own lover's safety was at stake?

It was daybreak when Roserl returned to her hut, disconsolate, broken-hearted, exhausted. The rain had nearly ceased. Without a moment's pause, she proceeded at once to the black hole. Looking around her, searching in every crevice, she climbed down the steep like a cat. "Franzl!" she called, when she fancied she saw or heard the least thing. But there was scarcely any voice left in her; it had died out with the hope in her heart. If she found him at all, it could but be as a corpse. Rather not see a trace of him, then he might be safe elsewhere. She began to 'give room to that reviving thought, when suddenly her heart stood still. What could that be lying there, half covered by an overhanging rock?—a human form? "Franzl!" she tried to articulate, but no voice came in reply. In vain she gasped for breath. But now!—could it be—was not that form moving? Could her dimmed eyes be mistaken? Oh, no!

There was an effort to move; one arm was thrown out and then employed to raise the recumbent head whose features remained hidden from Roserl's sight. "Franzl! Franzl!" her voice broke forth, piercing the air.

"Who is there?" a feeble cry answered from below.

Roserl never knew how she managed it, but in a minute she had got down the terrific height and was kneeling beside Franzl, looking anxiously into his pale face. Alive he was, but—she could not finish the thought; not a word could she say, but covered that death-stricken face with passionate, repentant kisses.

Franzl only now seemed to recognize her. "My Roserl!" he breathed, faintly.

"Thy Roserl—thy Roserl! Oh God, have mercy!" cried Roserl. Her head sank down on Franzl's breast, and she wept aloud.

Franzl lifted one arm, but his face was contorted with pain as he did so, and laid it caressingly around the girl's neck. "Oh, don't cry so, Roserl!"

"That is *my* doing," sobbed the poor girl. "I have sent thee down the pit!"

"No, no, Roserl; it was an accident. But don't cry so. I am not going to die yet. I have a mind to live a little longer. Only I—I—can't move a bit—horrid pains—something is smashed—only my leg, I believe—and a few ribs—oh!—never mind, Roserl, it will be all right soon, I daresay," and a fainting fit disclaimed all his protestations.

Roserl sobbed despairingly. "Franzl, Franzl! Only tell me thou hast forgiven me—only open thy eyes once more—only look on me once more!" which he, like a good boy, did. He made a frantic effort to shake off the dizziness.

"My own poor Roserl, it was all my own fault. I was mad with rage when I undertook to go down the Dark Hole. Like a blind man, I rushed into sure death, and met with what I deserved. I stumbled like a drunken man; and—before I was aware of slipping—I went down the whole height, with a rapidity that stunned me! The rushing waters woke me up; I should have been drowned there below. I tried to raise myself. I could not at first; but rather than be drowned, I made desperate efforts, and succeeded in dragging myself so far up. Here, with my head under the rock over which the waters fell with a loud rush, I thought I might rest awhile, and then I fainted again. Here I have spent the night, as it seems, Roserl." He paused, exhausted; the deadly pallor again spread over his face, which had been slightly tinged with colour whilst he had spoken. Roserl wept on in silence.

He soon opened his eyes again, and a light flush passed over his cheeks. Pointing to the breast-pocket of his torn coat, he said, with a faint look of mischievousness in his eyes, "But I have got the flowers!"

"Oh, give them to me again!" cried the girl, "give them to me. I will never part with them. I will never provoke thee again—*never, never!*"

"And Hansel?"

"I will *never* see him again! I asked him to help me to find thee—and he would not come with me!"

Franzl smiled. He seemed quite satisfied, and shut his eyes again, allowing Roserl to lavish her caresses upon him. She talked to him in broken, soothing, comforting accents, smoothed his dishevelled hair, kissed his pale forehead a hundred times over and over again. Then she laid her head on his chest, anxiously listening to his breathing, and rejoiced to feel his heart beat like a hammer against her cheek—that heart that she had feared to find so still.

The break of dawn had passed into daylight, and Roserl was still sitting with Franzl, supporting his head in her arms, resting it on her bosom, watching every breath he drew. He seemed asleep, and Roserl

dared not stir. Hansel did not come with the promised help. The sun rose high and higher; his glaring rays penetrated into the depth; it was evident no help was coming. The men must have left the Alm a long time ago, and now be at their work below. What could she do?

It was a great comfort to hold Franzl in her arms, to know that he was reconciled, and now her own in life or death. But what next?

How long could they remain there, perched on that cliff? And she had no idea yet to what extent Franzl might be crippled.

When at last Franzl opened his eyes to notice that it was broad daylight, she informed him that she must leave him for a minute to look out for assistance. Franzl consented; in fact, he was unable to show any resistance.

Roserl untied her apron and wrapped it around Franzl's poor bruised head, the only protection she could give to it before she let it down from her lap. Gently and very reluctantly she did it; but she must put it down again on the hard stone. Oh, how her heart bled!

She ran up to her hut—she hoped against hope to find Hansel there, and the others waiting for her to lead them on in the search. But she found nobody, and she knew if the young men had failed her, there was no help to be found anywhere in the neighbourhood. Yet Franzl could not be left in the precipice.

A little while afterwards, Roserl was descending the steep; blankets hanging on her arm, and her large soft feather-bed thrown over her shoulder. When Franzl saw her coming thus equipped, he exclaimed, "Why, Roserl, thou bringest me my bed—I suppose I am to make my home in this hole. And who knows, if I like it, I may winter here." Roserl smiled faintly; it was no matter of joke with her what she was about to undertake.

"I have come to bundle thee up like a baby, and to carry thee up to my room."

"Carry *me* up!" cried Franzl, starting with astonishment, and then, seized by pain, falling back again.

"Dost think I have not the strength? Didn't I carry my big cow-calf out of the Bergloch two years ago, when as yet I had not my full strength? Now I am a grown-up woman—and the other day I carried my father round the garden in fun."

"He surely had not the dead weight of a smashed body like mine. I should weigh upon thee like a stone, not being able to help a bit. I can't move."

"Thou canst a little; just a little; enough to turn over on to this feather-bed. Look here, couldst thou not do that?" She spread the feather-bed below the rock upon which Franzl was lying. It looked tempting.

"I'll try, at any rate," cried Franzl. With a desperate effort he actually moved round and gave himself a jerk. Down he came upon the bed

prepared for him. But the contortions of his face, the bite he gave his under lip, showed what immense pain he suffered in his broken limbs. Poor Franzl! Roserl had no time to express her compassion. She was desperate, too.

She set to work with energy, first composing his limbs straight on the couch, then wrapping the bed around him, as they do with babies in this country; turning blankets round and round over the feather-bed; and lastly tying the long towels over the firm bundle, until Franzl looked like a white prostrate column.

Franzl offered not the slightest resistance. The truth is, he had fainted away during the operation.

Roserl scarcely knew whether it was a living man or a corpse she was bundling about.

When he was ready, and could not have moved a limb even if he had shown any inclination to do so, Roserl rested awhile to rally all her strength. Then she drew a long breath, and proceeded to load Franzl on her back. Poor Franzl! his head hung over her shoulder; his feet, well preserved by the wrappings, dragged on the ground. However, he was on his progress out of the pit.

Roserl by supernatural strength had managed to reach the footpath, and now slowly, slowly, bent in two, walking with her hands as well as her feet, she proceeded upwards. When her strength failed, she remained for a minute lying flat under her load, with her face in the dust, then, with renewed vigour, began to creep again. So, crawling, creeping, dragging, she brought her burden higher and higher up. But it was a wearisome road; and many and fervent were the short prayers her sore heart sent up to Heaven during that toiling progress.

The longest lane comes to an end: they were nearing the top. Courage, Roserl! One more rest: another effort: and she was out of the precipice. Only a few more steps; of course a long time was required to drag over those few steps: but at last they were at the door. Another gasp for breath: they were safely in and now for the last and final effort. Roserl rose with her burden from the ground; she lifted it up, and laid it gently down upon her bed. Then all consciousness left her: she sank down on the floor at the foot of the bed in a deep swoon.*

So the boy found them who happened to come up soon after that afternoon in order to cart the provisions of milk, butter, and cheese down into the village. At first he thought them both dead and gone, and expressed his feelings by loud shrieks of distress. But soon he saw the bundle moving a little as if breath was still left in it, and being a sharp, courageous little chap, he investigated the matter before making up his mind to run away. The truth that these two people might be in a faint only—for there was no blood to be seen indicating

* The above circumstance is a fact.

murder—struck him forcibly; and the consequence was that Franzl and Roserl had the contents of a large water-tub emptied upon their heads: which judicious proceeding of the boy's was not without the anticipated effect. It revived them both, but Roserl alone was soon upon her feet, whilst Franzl only expressed by groanings that he was somewhat tired of his narrow prison. When Roserl, although staggering and shaking all over, untied Franzl's wrappings and tried to make him comfortable on the bed, she could not be mistaken about the nature of his injuries. His leg was broken, and no doubt some of the ribs; besides other damages she might not know of.

The boy was instantly despatched to a neighbouring valley for the wise shepherd, whom people consulted in preference to the old village surgeon. Michel, the shepherd was famous for his wonderful skill in curing breakages of any kind—be it man's or beast's bones, legs of tables and chairs, earthen pots or china-ware.

It was midnight before he came, and Franzl was in a high state of fever. However, Michel was in no way disconcerted. With the dexterity of an experienced man, he bandaged the broken creature up: not without first having applied his wonderful balm.

The whole performance had taken very little time; and after administering a draught to his patient, he departed, recommending Roserl to get a good sleep, and promising to come again next evening. The good doctor had to attend to his sheep before daybreak.

He had scarcely left when Franzl fell into a sound sleep: and Roserl, sitting on blankets on the floor, leaning her head against the pillow on which Franzl's was resting, slept soundly too.

The boy had attended to her wants. He had made a large fire on the hearth, had dried all the wet clothes, cooked a supper for Roserl and himself, and attended to the cows as best he could. Then, in the morning, without having taken any rest, he made up the fire again and left Roserl's broth ready for her on the hearth; then, with another look to see whether they were warm and comfortable, he commended the sleepers to God's Fatherly care in a short prayer, and left the Alm to carry down the provisions and the astounding tale. No doubt to-morrow would see Roserl's mother, aunts, cousins, and godmother on the Alm; but as yet the lovers were alone. The shepherd did not fail them next evening, and found Franzl's state as favourable as circumstances would allow. His view of the case greatly comforted Roserl.

The next night, when Franzl, opening his eyes after some hours refreshing sleep, met Roserl's gaze watching him, he could smile cheerfully. The ghastly look had left his face; there was even a sparkle of his old good-humour in his eyes, as he said:

"I have brought the Edelweis out of the hole, though!"

"No," said Roserl, mischievously, "thou hast not! *I* brought it out, and thee with it; and now I have an undisputable right to possess

you both." And then she kissed his lips to prevent him from answering. The shepherd had strictly forbidden talk.

Our tale is at an end. Franzl's broken bones healed as well and as quickly as his strong and thoroughly healthy nature permitted; the pure air of the Alps is an invigorating physic—and another was Roserl's devoted care. Roserl's mother and other female relatives offered assistance, which was thankfully accepted to a certain extent—but Roserl would not give up her post as head nurse to anyone.

Franzl was as merry as a lark in his bed, tied down as his limbs were. He was kept quiet by Roserl's sweet persuasion and her fond caresses; the doctor had strictly forbidden excitement of any kind. The task was not easy, however; when all other means failed, Roserl would put her pretty soft arms round his neck, and force the naughtiest, wickedest of boys to rest his dark, curly head on her bosom, and fondly stroking it she would sing a lullaby—such as they soothe the babies with. Franzl might struggle a little, but Roserl was now stronger than he—and so he laughed, obeyed, and was happy. Some time passed before he could be removed to his father's hut. It was then time to drive the cattle down; and they all went together.

By Christmas all was right again, everybody having recovered health and strength. There will be no more sommerfrische on the Alm for Roserl; for at Easter there will be a wedding.

MARIE ORM.

THE TEACUP TIMES.

TO the mind of the thoughtful student of the period reaching from about the first quarter of the seventeenth century to the present day, a curious idea is not unlikely to present itself: namely, the remarkable influence which the introduction and use of tea has effected upon female character.

Tea is universally admitted to be an essentially feminine beverage; nevertheless, since its introduction, it is an undeniable fact that woman has in some respects deteriorated. The woman of the present day is, very often, a kind of epicure, neither perfect woman nor perfect man; lamentably failing when she puts her weaker frame and different—not inferior—intellect into competition with that of the ruder sex, and never showing her impotence more plainly than when she would usurp masculine prerogatives. Nature resents being ignored, and

> "The laws of Nature there's no force to stop;
> Women may shriek, but men will keep the top."

The typical woman of Biblical and patriarchal times generally was the one, who, virtuous and industrious, looked after the welfare of her household; therein finding ample employment. It is a noticeable and significant fact that throughout the whole sacred record there is not a single instance of a female attempting to usurp male prerogatives.

Putting the women of the Scriptures aside, and coming to the literature of our own country, the works of Geoffrey Chaucer afford the first picture we have of English manners and customs. The abstract and brief chronicle of the times in which he lived, Chaucer's inimitable "Canterbury Tales," form a setting for the delineation of every phase of English life of that epoch. The accomplished abbess is a pleasant type of womanhood: the little feminine weaknesses and traits of character portrayed respecting her giving an exquisite softness and finish to the portrait. "The Man of Lawe's Tale," the story of the patient Griselda, is a fitting cabinet picture to accompany that of the abbess. It shows the secular side of woman's ideal character in days during which the sex may roughly be divided into two classes, namely, the women in convents and the women out of them. Each picture is perfect of its kind. The one is wedded to her faith, the other to an earthly husband, and in each we recognize the palpable admiration and reverence of Chaucer when delineating her essentially womanly attributes; also the sly humour with which the little vanities and weaknesses of both are touched upon.

Shakespeare has painted all sorts of women. Those of his own and every other time, under both ordinary and exceptional circumstances

but his all-pervading ideal is that of the woman who lives in her affections, who is swayed and ruled through them. She is dignified and noble in her feminine capacity, perfect in her estate, only falling from it when she would usurp masculine privileges.

Passing onward, we find here and there, in the history of English literature, isolated instances of a better state of female education. At the same time, it is a remarkable fact that the learned women of these ages did not attempt to *compete* with men. Queen Elizabeth, a scholar of no mean repute, is, when all is said and done, as thorough a woman and as great a paradox as any one of her sex. The gentle Lady Jane Grey may also be cited as an example of womanly dignity and modesty going hand in hand with erudition.

Milton's "Eve" can hardly be instanced as a conception of what woman should be; the "Lady" in Comus coming nearer to poor humanity in that respect. The great poet's rendering of female character is, in the abstract, full of reverence, and evinces, *apparently*, a just appreciation of her powers. The adverb is used advisedly, since there is a subtle irony in the fact that when Milton became blind he taught his daughters to read Greek and Latin to him in the original tongues, they not understanding what they were reading! How many women in this so-called age of advancement would have submitted to this tacit ignoring of their capabilities?

This brief retrospect brings us down to the period at which we would glance:—

> "The teacup times of hood and hoop,
> And when the patch was worn."

So sings the Laureate, painting, in a few happy touches, one of his marvellously vivid word-pictures. Seemingly an innocent little descriptive couplet, but pregnant with food for reflection for the thoughtful reader. Suggestive of well-powdered coiffures, done up high on enormous cushions; conjuring up visions of fair dames in square-cut and scanty bodices, high-heeled shoes, coloured satin petticoats, and flowered sacques. A goodly company, such as might have been seen congregated any evening at any of the brilliant receptions frequented by the wits and beauties of the day. Not less brilliant in their attire were the attendant swains in divers-coloured wide-skirted coats, long-flap embroidered waistcoats, snuff-boxes, and buckles, with their clouded canes and well-powdered queues. Correctly speaking, we ought to say the "*Tay*-cup times," for at the period to which we refer the word had not yet lost its French pronunciation. Dryden says:—

> "And thou, great ANNA, whom three realms obey,
> Dost sometimes counsel take, and sometimes tay."

So Pope pronounced it; so did Lady Mary Wortley Montagu; so did Samuel Pepys and his host of gossips; also Mr. Spectator, of whom more presently.

Fancy such a company, good reader, assembled in any lady's boudoir, daintily sipping the fragrant hyson—then the fashionable tea—from handleless cups of egg-shell china, whilst Pope and Lady Mary Wortley sparred at each other, or Pepys retailed the last scandal; what caudle-cups were tasted; what marriages were in prospective; what meetings had taken place at Chalk Farm; or who, at the last Drawing-room, had been pronounced the reigning beauty. At such a time, when Swift lived at St. James's, and paid eight shillings a week for his lodgings, and lay in bed to compose because the nights were cold and coal dear, he may have discussed Gay's death with Pope over a cup of tea. It was at such meetings the Dean gathered much of the materials which formed the staple of his immortal "Journal to Stella."

It is recorded that in 1657 tea had become so fashionable and customary a beverage amongst the upper classes that Thomas Gareway, merchant, of London, received of it a large consignment, which he sold at his house in the City. By this time the public coffee-houses had become recognized places of meeting for men of letters. The literature of the period is full of allusions to them, and it is a coincidence that their establishment is coeval with the first appearance of periodical literature in England. The *Tatler* and the *Spectator* were the offspring of coffee-house chat and gossip; its contributors being noted frequenters of these resorts, whence many of their letters are ostensibly dated. These places were the hotbeds from whence sprang what is commonly called light literature. After their introduction English poetry exhibits a character equally removed from the splendid brilliancy, yet solidity, of the days of Elizabeth, and the picturesque intensity of the new romantic school.

From these places of resort women were, of course, excluded; they could no more have appeared in them than in the taverns of the present day. Their frequenters gave a desultory tone to literature; a style so well suited to feminine capacity that we soon find that women, not wishing to let men have it all their own way, organized little tea-parties—or "tea-drinkings," as they were then called—where they retailed gossip, with this advantage, that they had the benefit of interchanging sentiments with the opposite sex. Women, as authors, now made their début. The Countess of Winchilsea, one of the first lady novelists, and a host of other satellites, appeared upon the literary horizon; Mrs. Aphra Behn, Mrs. Manley, Fanny Burney, &c.

These tea-drinkings had become such recognized institutions that they are repeatedly mentioned in the chief literature of the age. With the rage for tea-parties was developed the taste for china. The more grotesque the pattern and design, the more valuable the teacup.

Quaint, humorous Charles Lamb has thought the subject worthy of forming the theme of one of his inimitable essays; his "Old China" being

a perfect reflex of the public mind upon the matter. Speaking about the designs upon the teacups, he proceeds in the following amusing strain:—"I like to see my old friends, whom distance cannot diminish, figuring up in the air (as they appear to our optics), yet on terra firma still, for so we must in courtesy interpret that speck of deeper blue, which the decorous artist, to prevent absurdity, had made to spring up beneath their sandals. Here is a young and courtly mandarin handing tea to a lady from a salver two miles off. See how distance seems to set off respect! And here the same lady, or another—for likeness is identity on teacups—is stepping into a little fairy boat, moored on the hither side of this calm garden river, with a dainty mincing foot, which, in a right angle of incidence (as angles go in our world), must infallibly land her in the midst of a flowery mead, a furlong off on the other side of the same strange stream."

Throughout the *Spectator* and *Tatler*, the allusions to China and tea-parties bristle almost upon every page. The literature in general of the time often makes mention of tea-parties—corresponding to our "afternoon teas"—where the fine gentlemen read their poems and other literary productions to the fair dames, who delivered their opinions thereupon. We can fancy the cynical Pope, at one of these pleasant gatherings, throwing down the apple of discord by asserting that "most women have no characters at all," a sentiment which may have quickened into new life any germs of self-assertion which his hearers may have possessed. Dr. Samuel Johnson's partiality for tea, and his capacity for imbibing it, are well known, and go far towards giving a colouring of truth to the prevailing opinion that tea and scandal are synonymous, for the learned Doctor was as arrant a gossip as the veriest old woman. Certainly his sentences were sonorous and pedantic, but they were gossip all the same.

About this time we first hear of the "Madonella," or college for ladies, where they were to be taught something higher than "flowering," or making "bone-lace." Against this scheme Steele writes very strongly in the *Tatler*. However, all the fine gentlemen do not seem to have shared his opinion in that respect; for in that outrageously amusing, and but little known work, "The Life of J. Buncle, Esq.," there is a grave and exquisitely humorous dissertation upon the moral thoughts of Miss Spence, otherwise the admirable Maria, who "learned algebra and fluxions." Pope, in one of his satires, praises the woman who is

> "Mistress of herself, though china fall."

And Matthew Prior, in describing the engagements of a lady of quality, says she

> "Slipt sometimes round to Mrs. Thody's,
> To cheapen tea, to buy a screen."

Eustace Budgell, whose papers to the *Spectator* are signed "X.,"

rites thus : "Mr. Spectator, your paper is a part of my tea equipage, nd my servant knows my humour so well, that calling for my breakast this morning (it being past my usual hour) she answered, the *pectator* was not yet come in; but that the tea-kettle boiled, and she xpected it in every minute." The extract is quite applicable to the nanners and customs of the present day.

As a natural consequence of their sex and organization mentally, omen rushed into extremes, and made a curious jumble of patches nd politics at these tea-drinkings. Will Honeycomb calls the grand adies "Picts, with assumed countenances," and hints that their learnng is as superficial as their complexions.

The literary dilettanteism so crudely developed by the women during hese teacup times is much ridiculed by all the writers of the age. It as the useless and absurd dawn of *competition* with the masculine ntellect which they decried, *not* the fact of women endeavouring to ender themselves pleasant and intelligent members of intellectual ociety. An old essay of the period, written in that terse, literal style hich presents a vivid picture, gives an account of a lady's boudoir. he fair occupant was much given to tea and literature, which, in her ind, were so closely allied that her china teacups were used as appropriate means of separating the quartos from the folios, the octavos being ounded by tea-dishes, in all shapes, colours, and sizes. The intruder elt a strong awe and admiration for the lady upon perceiving, amongst er books, "Locke on the Human Understanding;" but the sentiment oon changed to pity when he found, upon opening the volume, that it as used for the purpose of holding patches !

Congreve, blind poet and sublime egoist, was the darling of these ttle tea-drinking coteries, where he was flattered and caressed, and his orks quoted to him by subtle sycophants who thus fed his inordinate anity. Byron, in more modern times, has satirised the masculine oman of his day in many of his pieces, but notably so in "The lues."

Physicians tell us that tea is injurious to the nervous system. Without attempting to go into the matter from a medical point of view, it ay be mentioned, in conclusion, that until the introduction and eneral use of this infusion, there was no such malady known as "fits f the vapours;" but, after the recognized system of tea-drinkings, the omplaint became quite a common one. The question is interesting, oth in a physical and a psychological sense.

E. Owens Blackburne.

ZILLAH.

WE had been restless and uneasy all day as are fishes out o water, and when the whistle of the in-coming train brok suddenly upon the still summer air, we started as if it were an entirel new and unexpected sound. Whereas, the fact was, we had bee listening and waiting for that sound the whole of the afternoon.

My father looked up from the book he had been reading, and a gla gleam shone from the black eyes behind the spectacles. Ralph ra in from the garden all excitement. "Did you hear the whistle?" h exclaimed. "The train is in."

And what were we all so excited about, you will ask; and who wa it that the train was bringing? Why, no less a person than our siste Zillah: Baby Zillah, as we still fondly called her. She had been a school, and we had not seen her for a whole year.

My father had married twice. I was the eldest child of the firs wife; consequently, a maiden lady of thirty-five at the time of whic I write. The sister next to me was not living. Ralph was next oldest Harry next, and when he was a year old mother had died and left us. Scarcely two years later, our father brought home another wife; and she lived to give birth to one baby girl, when she too died. It wa this baby girl, now a young lady of nineteen, yet still "our baby," wh was coming. Four years before, we had sent her away to a fashionable finishing school: one of those new establishments that are called colleges. Two or three young ladies, whom we knew, had bee "finished" there; and they returned so greatly improved, that we resolved to send Zillah. The college was in the metropolis, a long, long way removed from our country home. A Mrs. Harvey was its principal, and it was so much frequented that some of the young ladies had to board out of it. So to this place and to this lady Zillah was entrusted; and during her four years' sojourn there, she had made but three visits home. Once every year in the long summe vacation; and now she was coming for the fourth and last time; coming to stay. Nobody knew how dear this child was to us. I would no go to the station to meet her, lest I should make a simpleton o myself.

The rumble of approaching wheels; the stopping of a carriage at the great gate: Harry leaping out of it, and assisting a closely-veiled figure after him. Zillah!

She came slowly up the path, so slowly that I looked at her in amazed silence. Always before she had bounded in like a young gazelle.

"Zillah!" I cried, starting forward at length, and then she threw up her veil, and held out her arms.

Could *this* be Zillah? *She* had rounded cheeks the colour of blush-roses, and dewy lips, and starry eyes. This girl had a thin white face, and quivering lips, and dim eyes, sunken and hollow.

"Zillah, my darling sister, what is the matter?" I cried, drawing her into an empty room, and holding her to my heart. But Zillah hid her face upon my shoulder, and wept quietly without speaking. My father came in with a sober face.

"What is the matter with my little girl?" he said. "Has she not a word of welcome for her old father?"

Zillah freed herself from my arms, and kissed him silently. "I am so tired," she said, attempting apology, "and so weak and sick, and—and the joy of getting home has unnerved me, papa."

"What has made you feel sick, my child?"

"I have not been very well lately," she answered, "and—and the day is hot. Perhaps I had better lie down for half an hour."

I led the way quietly to her room, and put her comfortably on the sofa. She would not take any tea, she said, she would wait for supper. So I left her till supper-time, and then went to her room. She was lying there awake, her great hollow eyes wide open.

"Supper is ready, Zillah."

Getting up at once, she followed me down to the dining-room, and took her old place at the table. She praised all that was on it, but she did not taste a mouthful. Even her old favourite, strawberry-tart, she would not touch.

"Those trains are nasty things," said my father. "They make some people feel as sick as if they were on the sea."

Old-fashioned country folk, such as ourselves, keep early hours; and when supper was over and we went into our usual sitting-room, the sun was still shining. Zillah lifted her hands, "How light it is here!" she exclaimed, with a little shudder. "Please draw the blinds down, Rachel; I cannot bear the glare."

I obeyed her in silence. A very uncomfortable feeling was stealing over me as to what could be amiss with Zillah. I had seen her sick before; but I had never seen her like this.

"Play something for us, Zillah," cried Harry, as she sat down—mechanically, it seemed to me—on the music-stool. But she only sounded a few dreary minor chords. My father came in, and took his easy-chair.

"I am waiting to hear my old favourite song, darling," he said to her.

She knew which he meant: that old plaintive ballad, "The light of other days."

Glancing round at him, as if in hesitation, she began the song. But her voice broke down, and ended in a sob.

"I cannot sing, and I cannot play to-night, papa," she said, rising hastily and closing the piano. "I am so tired, and so weary, and there is no music in my heart. I think I will go upstairs at once: I shall be better to-morrow. No, Rachel, don't you come: I would rather go alone."

So I took my seat again, and she left the room, just speaking a general good-night to us all at the door.

A cold shadow fell upon us, and we looked at each other questioningly. "What ails Zillah?" each heart was asking. Harry tried to whistle in an unconcerned manner; but it was a failure. My father took up his book, but kept turning the leaves, and I knew he did not read a word. Zillah's coming home this time was so different from what it always had been. We must wait and see what the morning brought forth.

It did not bring forth much. She came down, saying she was better, but pale and listless.

That day the family doctor was called in, Dr. Wall, in defiance of Zillah's protestations against such a procedure. The old physician looked at Zillah's white cheeks and sunken eyes, placed his finger and thumb on her white wrist, asked her a few questions, and then delivered his opinion.

"You have been doing too much. Worn out with that abominable school. Why must women go in for every kind of learning now? It's unfit for them. Take degrees? Rubbish. Degrees are for men to take, not women. My dear, you have just overtaxed your strength. I will send you some physic, and you must take rest."

"Is it anything serious, doctor?" questioned my father, meeting the old man as he went out.

"Not at all, Mr. Seaton. She is done over with those incessant lectures and all the rest of it. The new system, sir, will send more girls out of the world than the old one did. It is nothing serious, though, with Miss Zillah: she is just worn out; exhausted. She must take rest, and the medicine I shall send her, and she'll soon be all right."

But when the medicine came, in the shape of a packet of powders, Zillah quietly tossed them out of her bedroom window. "I do not need or want any medicine," she said, "and I will not poison myself with it."

The days glided on, and there was no improvement in Zillah. I suspected—but I don't think my father did—that the illness was mental illness, not bodily. Her old friends called, but their visits seemed to give her little pleasure, and their expressions of surprise and sorrow at the change in her annoyed her exceedingly.

"I wish they would all stay away," she exclaimed one day, "and leave me alone, with my own people! I do not want to see anyone else."

"Not even Cliff Proudleigh?" I asked: and at the name Zillah turned away.

Mr. Proudleigh was a lawyer in the neighbouring town, a nice young fellow and a rising man. When she was last at home he paid her marked attention, and she seemed to like it.

"No, not even Cliff Proudleigh," she answered, standing at the window with her back to me, and her face flushing from brow to chin. "He, least of all. I am glad he has gone on a journey; I shall be free from his persecutions for a time at least. I wish I might never see him again."

I was too amazed to speak. Every day some new and unaccountable whim seemed to be added to Zillah's peculiarities. She was not at all the Zillah of last year.

But Cliff Proudleigh returned the very next day, and in the evening he came up to our house. Zillah saw him from the window, and attempted to run upstairs, but I would not let her go.

"You shall not be so foolish," I said. "What would he think? If you do not wish to receive his attentions, you can very easily make him understand it, but you shall not run and hide." I was really provoked with the girl for her strange ways.

Mr. Proudleigh never said a word to Zillah concerning the change in her appearance. He started a little when he first looked at her, but said nothing. I thanked him in my heart for it.

When he left I was in the garden trimming some dead leaves and branches from my rose-bush. He crossed the grass to wish me good-bye.

"What has come over your sister, Miss Seaton?" he asked, in his low musical voice, as he held my hand. "I never saw anyone so changed."

"And we all feel that as deeply as you do, and are just as much at a loss to know what ails her," I said. "She is always just as you see her. Never different. Nothing arouses or affects her in any way. Dr. Wall says it is the result of over-study. He has known some girls driven half mad by the pressure that is put upon their brains!"

"It is very dreadful," cried Mr. Proudleigh, drawing a long breath, and there was a great fear in his eyes. He had taken up Dr. Wall's theory more deeply than I had meant.

"I do not think her *life* is in any danger," I hastened to say; "no, nor her mind really. The worst is, she is so listless and languid. I do not know what to do, and can only wait for time to work a change."

Zillah grew more of an enigma to me daily. Mr. Proudleigh walked up often. I knew that she watched for him; that she longed for his coming; and if he failed to come when expected, she would be restless and uneasy: yet she was always cold, formal, and distant in his presence, and sometimes hid herself away, and would not see him at

all. And she would have long, passionate spells of weeping. The most trivial occurrences, such as a thorn in her finger, or the death of a kitten, would set her on: but, as it seemed to me, she merely seized upon these things to give vent to her overburdened heart.

"I believe you have left a lover behind you at that precious college," I said to her one day. "You had better tell me about him, Zillah."

"I have left no lover there, or anywhere else," she answered. "Love is a cheat and—and a delusion. And I wish——"

"Wish what, child?"

"Never mind what, Rachel."

It was on the last day of August that Zillah's mood changed. I remember the date well. The postman had delivered the morning letters: one for my father on business, two for Zillah from school friends, and one for me. Zillah read her letters listlessly as usual, had put both down before I had finished the second page of mine, and she then took up the newspaper.

Suddenly there was a sharp cry, and we looked up startled. It came from Zillah. She was pale as death, and had risen from her seat, the newspaper dropping from her nerveless hand.

"Why, what is the matter?" I asked, in alarm.

The question seemed to bring her to her senses. She smoothed her face, into which the colour was returning, and affected to laugh.

"Do forgive me, Rachel! I have not lost my foolish fear of spiders."

And with that she escaped, and ran upstairs. Ralph looked at me. My father, dulled with age, was spelling out his letter through his spectacles.

"I did not see any spider, Ralph!"

"It was no spider, Rachel," he answered, in a whisper. "It was something in this newspaper!"

He picked it up, and ran his eyes over the columns she had been looking at. We carried it outside, and gazed at them together.

"I see nothing here that would concern *her*," said Ralph, telling over aloud the items of news. "'Great fire. Shock of an earthquake. Servant-girl drowned. Two young men get drinking in Ireland, quarrel, shoot at each other with pistols, one of them—Gerald Oakley—is wounded mortally, dies. Arrival of the Sultan. Wheat gone up a shilling a quarter'—and so on, and so on," concluded Ralph. "All this can be nothing to Zillah."

"Let me look for myself, Ralph," I said, taking the paper from his hand, fully persuaded he had missed something or other that would prove the clue.

But no: I could see nothing. And I told Ralph that, after all, it must have been a spider.

From that day Zillah changed. She became herself again. Her

cheeks regained their bloom, her eyes twinkled like twin stars. Old Dr. Wall put it all down to his physic.

She became gay, too, more like the Zillah of old, and astonished us all by her flow of spirits. Mr. Proudleigh was fairly astonished at the change in her. His attentions were unobtrusive, but none could doubt that he was seriously attached to Zillah. "It is all owing to a spider," said Ralph one day in the lawyer's hearing. "Zillah saw a spider one morning, and it pleased her so she cannot get over it yet. I hope she won't." I saw Zillah flush, and pale, and shiver under Ralph's light words.

Before two months had passed, Zillah was as bright, as sparkling, as witty, as beautiful as ever. She had her days of gloom, when her moods were alternately sullen and sad: "the blues," she called them; but in the main she was just the same as of old, only more fascinating She played and sang a great deal, and her voice was really remarkable in its strength and sweetness. Mr. Proudleigh's visits became more frequent, and we all saw how it would end. We had no objection. Cliff Proudleigh was a noble young fellow, and if Zillah must go, as we knew she must some time, we were glad it should be to him, and not farther away from us.

December came in. In that month they were formally betrothed, and the marriage was to be on the third of April. Zillah crept to my room and showed me her ring, and hid her wet face in my lap, after she had given Cliff her promise.

"Why these tears, Zillah?"

"I am so happy—and yet so miserable," she whispered, in answer.

"Miserable! and why?" I asked, in surprise.

"Because I—I have been concealing something from you so long. Oh, Rachel, I must tell you. But don't blame me, don't despise me, for Heaven knows I have suffered enough for my folly."

"Well, child, what is it?"

"But *promise* me, Rachel, that you will not reveal what I tell you."

I stroked the soft cheek soothingly. "Whatever you tell me, little sister, I promise you shall never be betrayed. You may trust me."

"I have wanted to tell you ever since I came home," she said, "but I never could muster the courage until to-night. Now I feel as if I could not rest until you knew it. I cannot marry Cliff until it is told. It is something about my school life, Rachel."

"Well, well, dear: let me know it, whatever it be."

"We had great liberty, you must understand; great liberty. A college is not like a school, where you are watched over: at least, this one was not. Young ladies, when they come to a certain age, are now trusted more than they used to be. Some of the pupils live out of doors, and we could visit them almost as we liked."

"I see what you are going to tell me, Zillah. You picked up a lover."

"Yes. Gerald Oakley. He was a bold, reckless, strikingly handsome young man; a brilliant scholar, of dashing manners; just the sort of man to dazzle a silly girl; and half the girls in the college were in love with his handsome black eyes and glossy curls. I never loved him; indeed, Rachel, I never loved him; but I was dazzled by his attentions, and proud of being envied by the girls. He made me protestations of love, and was so impassioned, so persistent, that I entered into an engagement of marriage. That was just before I came home last year."

"And you never told us!"

She shook her head. "Immediately upon my return to school, he began to urge me to consent to a secret marriage. He never could be happy, he said, until he knew that I was *his*, and his alone. He wanted to be *sure* of me, and a year was so long to wait. We could be married secretly, and keep it a secret until the proper time appointed for our marriage, he urged; when we could be re-married publicly, and no one need ever know what had passed unless we chose to tell. He was rich, he said, and had a good home to give me eventually, one that my father could not object to, and he meant to read for the bar, and make his mark in the world."

"But did you listen to this, Zillah?"

"I would not listen at first, and he became angry, and for a week we scarcely spoke to each other. It made me almost wild with jealous pain when I saw him smiling down upon the other girls, and I thought then that I could risk anything, rather than lose him. Well, Rachel —don't frown; don't make me think worse of myself than I already do—he arranged matters, and we were married in private in some old city church."

I gasped for breath. Speak to her I could not. Zillah went on.

"For a few months the romance of the deed, and the novelty of being a bride in secret, and the exultation of knowing that the handsomest man in the world was mine, were all enough for me. Then I began to think how rash I had been."

"And you went back to college all the same?" I said, breathlessly.

"Of course I did. But I could go out to meet him almost when I liked. I have told you we elder girls had great liberty."

"How do you know it was a legal marriage?"

"Oh, it was that, Rachel. The clergyman gave me a certificate."

"Well, go on."

"Gerald grew tyrannical in time, and was unreasonably and absurdly jealous if I even chatted for a moment with any other gentleman in his presence. He was indiscreet in his conduct too, would demand that I should go out to see him at times when he knew we were not

allowed to go out, and then would upbraid me for not coming. I lived in constant fear that my secret would be discovered. Day by day I discovered new faults in my husband; I saw how selfish he was, how unprincipled; in short, how *worthless;* and I grew to dread to see him. When six months had passed, my eyes were fully opened, and I saw how foolishly reckless my conduct had been; but it was too late. Gerald was changing in other ways. His manners, his language, grew bad; and I at length found that he was frequently intoxicated."

"Oh, Zillah!"

"My yoke almost maddened me. It is no wonder I grew haggard and hollow-eyed. But neither governesses nor schoolfellows suspected the cause. They called it over-study; and I did indeed study hard those weeks, to keep up with the rest for the examination. Gerald grew worse. He offended one day against the laws of order, and got locked up by the police. One of his friends, speaking of it before me, said he had never in all his life known any young man who had succumbed to the vice in the rapid manner that Gerald Oakley had."

"Good heavens, child!"

"One day he dared to come to the college, and ask to see me. We were in the French room. Mrs. Harvey, not understanding who it was, only that a visitor had asked for me, said I might go. Gerald was waiting in the reception-room. He had been drinking, and was in a half-maudlin, half-reckless mood.

"'We have both been fools,' he said. 'I am as sick of it as you are, Zillah, and I propose that we say quits. I got you into this, and I will let you off, without saying a word to anybody, if you will me. I could not take you with me, you see.'

"'Where are you going?' I gasped.

"'Over to Ireland: called away on business. Let it be so. I will go my way and you shall go yours, and we will never molest each other, and it shall be as if we had never met. The man who married us is dead, and the secret shall stay a secret between you and me. If I propose this, Zillah, it is your fault; and it is as much for your sake as mine; for you have learnt to hate me, and you know it.'"

"And what did you answer?"

"I seized upon his suggestion with eagerness, for death itself would have been preferable to life with him. I felt that my life was for ever blighted, but it gave me a little relief to think he was willing to go and leave me in peace; and he went. He was true to his word, and never, I am sure, lisped the secret to a soul. To this day no living being knows or suspects what I have told you, save myself. For Gerald Oakley is dead. I saw his death in the paper that day when I cried out. It was he who was shot in that quarrel in Ireland, and killed. That newspaper is in my drawer here, and you can read what

it says. I know I was wicked and sinful to feel so glad over such a death; but oh, Rachel, it was horrible to think I was his lawful wife, and that he might some time claim me. It was just like the nightmare all the time. And now tell me: do you think it is wrong to keep this a secret from Cliff? I *cannot* tell him, it seems to me, and he will never know it unless I do. *Need* I tell him?"

My eyes grew dim with tears of compassion as I looked down in the pleading eyes and agonized young face.

"The secret appears to be safe," I said, after thinking, "as the clergyman and Gerald are both dead. As to Mr. Proudleigh?—well, I hardly know. You should have told him this before accepting him."

"But I did not—I could not. Oh! Rachel, don't say I must tell him now!"

I did not say it. It was wrong of me, I know; but I so felt for Zillah. She covered my face with kisses.

And still the days went by, and every one brought Zillah's wedding-day nearer. She and Cliff seemed two as happy lovers as ever walked in Paradise. It reminded me of the days long gone, when I—but this story is not about me. I knew that Zillah fairly worshipped Cliff with all the ardour of her nature, and he loved her with as pure a passion as man ever felt for woman. Her voice seemed to soar up to the clouds sometimes. I used to wonder, when I heard her singing, if she went up to heaven in the night and learned her notes from the angels.

And so the winter melted away, and March came in. A lovely March, bright and mellow as May.

It wanted but two weeks to the wedding, when one evening Mr. Proudleigh came up later than usual. Zillah was at the piano, singing a new little song. She began it again for her lover.

"I should have been here earlier," he carelessly remarked, as she finished; "but for having to go to Wexborough to-day on business."

"All the way to Wexborough!" exclaimed Zillah.

"I went by train. And when there, I met with an old acquaintance whom I had not seen since we were boys together—but he is younger than I. I should not have recognized him but for hearing his name called out. He was standing at the door of the Old Bull Inn, looking fearfully ill, and his arm in a sling."

"An accident, I suppose?"

"I suppose so, Rachel. He did not explain; only that he had been shot, and injured inwardly, as well as having his arm broken. All he said to me about it was, that he had got into a quarrel some time ago, and it ended in his being shot."

"What's his name? Does he live at Wexborough?"

"No; he does not live there. Never, so far as I know, was there before. His name is Oakley—Gerald Oakley!"

A minute's pause; and then Zillah's hands seemed to be playing curious work with the keys. I ran up to save her from falling.

"She has been singing all the evening," I said, as they came round her, wonderingly, "and has overtaxed her strength. Ralph, open the window. It is only a fainting fit. And do you all please go out, and send Harriet in. Yes, even you, Mr. Proudleigh. She will get round quicker alone."

We got her upstairs to bed; and I kept everybody away from her, and took my own things to her room for the night. Mr. Proudleigh went home concerned.

Zillah's grief and despair were awful. I could not comfort her—how could I?—and I thought it would end in brain fever. For two or three days she stayed in bed. Her lover came over, but she would not see him. She would see no one but me. "What is the matter with her?" my father and the boys kept asking: and to that I only answered that she needed quiet and rest.

She would cover her face, and sob and moan, asking what she was to do, and wishing she could die. I was well-nigh crazed myself—my brain was in a whirl. At any time, as it seemed to me, we might expect to see Gerald Oakley. What else could he have gone to Wexborough for, but to come on to Zillah? I had had many a trial in my life, but none like this.

It was on the third afternoon that a note came from Mr. Proudleigh, to inquire how Zillah was, and to say that he should not be able to come himself that day. Poor Zillah tossed her burning head from side to side on the pillow as she read it.

"Don't, Zillah! Do try to be more calm. You will surely have a fever."

"I wish I could have one—and die!" was the answer. "Oh, what will become of me?—what will become of me?"

In despair, for she was worse than ever to-day, I sent for old Dr. Wall. Zillah feigned sleep when he came, and would not speak to him. But he saw her flushed face.

"What is she so excited over?" asked the old man. "This wedding of hers that's coming off? If so, the sooner it's over the better. I will send her a sedative."

She took the sedative; she did take that. "I wish it was a dose of laudanum," she cried, "that would put me to sleep for ever!"

The next evening, as usual, Mr. Proudleigh came. My brothers were all out, my father was asleep, and I had to go down to him.

"Did you get my note yesterday, Miss Seaton?" he asked, after making inquiry after Zillah.

"Oh yes. Your servant brought it quite safely," I replied.

"I got a telegram from Wexborough this morning, asking me to go over to see the gentleman I told you of—Gerald Oakley. He was

worse, and the landlord of the Bull telegraphed. I made what haste I could; but it was too late."

"What do you mean?—how too late?" I cried, my heart beating.

"When I got there, poor Oakley was dead. He had died only ten minutes before."

I went to the open window, apparently to look at something; in reality, to gasp away my emotion, and get a breath of fresh, cold air. "What was the matter with him?" I said, striving to appear calm and careless.

"That old inward injury he spoke of, the shot, had not healed, and there arose sudden complications which speedily ended in death. Poor fellow! The landlord said he was most anxious to see me, as he had something on his mind that he wished to tell me, and also a will to make. He could do neither: death was too quick."

"And—don't you know what it was he wished to say? Does not the landlord know?"

"No: Oakley did not disclose a word of it. Failing a will, his brother comes into his money. I am going over the day after to-morrow to the funeral."

"Good-bye, Mr. Proudleigh," I said, when he was taking leave. "Yes, I will be sure to give your message and your love to Zillah; and I think she will soon be better now."

What news it was to carry her!—joyful news for her, though sad in itself. When the first emotion was spent, Zillah cried softly. Cried, it seemed to me, the best part of the night.

"I shall tell all to Cliff Proudleigh now, Rachel," she said the following morning; "and leave it with him to forgive me, or to break with me, just as he sees best. Oh, never, never will I conceal anything again; not the smallest event in the world: these last few days have nearly killed me, and they will leave me a lesson for life."

Zillah chose an evening for the communication when she and her lover were alone. The boys were out cricketing; I was driving my father up and down the green lanes in the pony-chaise. Seated by themselves at the open window in the twilight, she made her confession.

Did Cliff Proudleigh break with her? No; his love was true and deep, and he only gathered her to his heart with a greater sense of protection. The wedding was put off to the autumn by Zillah's wish: and when my father and the boys, and all our friends and acquaintances wanted to know why, she told them she wanted to get a little stronger first.

But Mr. and Mrs. Proudleigh, who are prospering well, manifest a strong dislike to the new-fashioned independence that girls like to assume, and to the "colleges" that help to give it them. Never, I am quite sure, will their own daughters be sent to one, or be educated away from home.

THE ARGOSY.

DECEMBER, 1875.

A SECRET OF THE SEA.

By T. W. SPEIGHT,

Author of "In the Dead of Night," "Under Lock and Key," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

TOLD AT LAST.

OLIVE DEANE had taken her leave of Lady Dudgeon, and was crossing the hall towards the side door, close to which the fly which had brought her from Pembridge was still waiting, when suddenly the doors, at the opposite side of the hall, were opened, and as they swung back on their hinges, a sight met her eyes that for a moment or two seemed to turn her to stone. Supported on one side by Dr. Whitaker, and resting his other arm on the shoulder of Pod Piper, like a man newly-risen from the tomb, Matthew Kelvin stepped slowly and painfully across the threshold.

A strange, fierce light sprang to the sick man's eyes the moment he saw who was standing there. Olive's cheek whitened as she looked, her breath came mor equickly, she pressed her hand involuntarily to her heart as though she were in pain, then she went two or three steps nearer, and then she halted again, as though in doubt or fear.

"Matthew! You here?" she said, at last.

"So you are not gone yet!" was the answer. "It is well. I have something to say to you. Follow me."

Then the ghastly procession began to move slowly forward again, and, preceded by one of the baronet's servants, it crossed the hall, and went in the direction of the library. Olive, following silently behind, was the last to enter the room. She shut the door behind her, and stood quietly in the background, unheeded, for the time, by everyone. Vague, dark forebodings were at work in her heart. "What did it all mean?" she asked herself, again and again.

As soon as Mr. Kelvin was seated, the servant and Pod Piper left the room.

"Why, bless my heart, is that you or your ghost?" cried Sir Thomas, starting up from his chair and rubbing his eyes. He had been taking forty winks, surreptitiously. Gerald, in the act of reaching a book from one of the shelves, turned with the volume in his hand as Kelvin and the others came into the room.

"He will be better in a little while," said Dr. Whitaker to the baronet, who had crossed the room, and was now standing, with his hands under his coat-tails, and pursed-up lips, gazing down, with compassionate eyes, at the half-conscious man before him.

"What a wreck—what a terrible wreck!" murmured the baronet "I—I never dreamt that he was half as bad as this."

Dr. Whitaker put something to the sick man's nostrils, which he inhaled eagerly, and presently he began to revive.

"I trust, Sir Thomas, that you will pardon my intrusion," he said, at last, speaking in a strange, husky voice, that was little more than a whisper, and was totally unlike the well-remembered voice—clear and confident—of Matthew Kelvin. "That my business here is of a very pressing kind you may well believe, when you see me thus and so attended. I am here on the same errand that brought Miss Deane here this morning. You have, I presume, read the letter that I sent by Miss Deane?"

"Miss Deane gave me no letter. She told me a long rigmarole about ——"

"Oh, Matthew, I lost the letter!" cried Olive, coming a step or two nearer. "I lost the letter; but I knew what you had written, and I delivered your message just the same."

"You could not have known what I had written unless you had read my letter," said Kelvin, coldly and sternly.

"Oh, Matthew! why do you say such cruel things of me?" cried Olive, imploringly. "You know how I knew what the contents of your letter would necessarily be."

"Has the message which Miss Deane gave you been given also to Lady Dudgeon and to Miss Lloyd?" asked Kelvin of the baronet.

"Certainly—to both of them. They were told first of all."

"I hope you will not think that I am asking too much if I ask you to kindly request Lady Dudgeon's and Miss Lloyd's presence here for a few minutes."

"We'll have them here in a brace of shots," said Sir Thomas, heartily.

Gerald rang the bell, a servant came in, and a message was sent to Lady Dudgeon and Miss Lloyd. A minute later they entered the room.

Lady Dudgeon was genuinely shocked to see Mr. Kelvin looking so ill, and chided him gently for venturing so far from home. Eleanor went up to him and shook hands with him. He saw the tears standing in her eyes, and his own eyes fell before her. Love and remorse were busy

in his heart. "How bitterly I have wronged her!" he moaned to himself. "What a confession is this which I am here to make!"

"The letter which I wrote this morning," began Mr. Kelvin, struggling with his weakness, "and which, by some strange mischance, appears to have been lost, was addressed to Miss Lloyd. It would appear, however, that my cousin, Olive Deane, who was certainly cognisant of most of the circumstances of the case, has told you what were the contents of the letter. There are certain other circumstances, however, of which as yet you know nothing, and it is of these that I am now here to speak." He paused for a moment or two, to gather breath, and to moisten his lips with a cordial.

"You may remember, Sir Thomas," resumed Kelvin, "that some little time after Mr. Lloyd's death, I once or twice mentioned it to you that amongst his papers I had not been able to find any clue as to where Miss Lloyd was either born or baptised. It was requisite, before taking out letters of administration, that I should have some trustworthy information on this point; but there being no particular hurry in the matter, and I being busy at the time with other important work, one week went on after another without my making any serious effort to supply the necessary link. Still, when the discovery did come, it was as great a surprise to me as it can possibly have been to any of you."

"Then you think there is not the slightest possibility of there being any mistake in the matter?" said her ladyship.

"I have in my possession a document, written and signed by Jacob Lloyd himself, in which he states that the young lady, supposed to be his daughter, was merely adopted by himself and his wife in her infancy."

"Is no clue given as to her real parentage?"

"None whatever. But I have also in my possession a sealed packet, which I will presently give to Miss Lloyd—a packet addressed to her by Mr. Lloyd himself, but with instructions that it should not be given to her till after his death. Inside this packet I think it quite possible that Miss Lloyd may find all the particulars she would like to know."

There was a pause. Dr. Whitaker whispered something in his patient's ear, but Kelvin only shook his head impatiently.

"You remarked just now, Mr. Kelvin," said Lady Dudgeon, "that there were some other circumstances connected with this remarkable case which you thought it desirable that we should become acquainted with."

"Precisely so, madam. It is for that purpose that I am here. The revelation I am about to make is a very painful one—very painful and humiliating to me. But I have made up my mind to make it, and I will not shrink from doing so, whatever may be the consequences to myself."

Once more he paused and put the cordial to his lips. That he was deeply moved, all there could plainly see, but Olive Deane alone was in a position to guess the cause.

"This is the confession that I have to make," he began at last. "The news you have heard to-day respecting Miss Lloyd has been in my possession not for a few days only, as you probably imagine, but for five long months."

"Oh, Mr. Kelvin!" cried Eleanor.

"But what could your motive possibly be for keeping a piece of information of that kind to yourself for so long a time?" cried Lady Dudgeon.

"I will tell you what my motive was—tell you all. Eighteen months ago I made Miss Lloyd an offer of marriage."

"Bless my heart! now who would have thought that?" cried Sir Thomas.

"Miss Lloyd rejected me. Six months later, I tried my fortune again, but with no better result. It seemed to me—but I may have been mistaken—that in this second rejection there was an amount of disdain, of—of contempt almost—that stung me to the quick, and I vowed that, if the opportunity were ever given me, I would be revenged."

"Oh, Mr. Kelvin, how you misunderstood me—misread me!"

"I know it, and feel it now. I did not know it or feel it at the time. My mind must have been warped by its own bitterness. There stands the temptress,"—pointing to Olive Deane,—"who first suggested the idea to me."

All eyes were turned on Olive Deane, who was still standing in the background, not far from the door. Her eyes were bent on the carpet, and her face was deathly pale. Suddenly she lifted her eyes, and flashed back a look of scorn that took in everyone there except her cousin; a bitter smile curled her thin lips for a moment, then she drew a chair forward and sat down without a word. No one spoke.

"I am telling you this," resumed Kelvin, "not as blaming my cousin for her suggestion, but as a confession of my own weakness and wretched folly. That my feelings were very bitter against Miss Lloyd I need hardly tell you; and yet how I despised myself for doing as I was doing, no one but myself can ever know. Then came my illness, which lasted so long that I began to fancy I should never get better again; but all through it the wrong that I had done Miss Lloyd lay with a terrible weight on my conscience, and the first day that I was strong enough to hold a pen I wrote to her that letter, which she ought to have received this morning."

"All this was very, very wrong of you, Mr. Kelvin," said Lady Dudgeon. "Unfortunately, however, none of us can undo the past, and I am quite sure that in this case your own conscience will be your

severest punishment. Miss Deane said something about a nephew of the late Mr. Lloyd being the real heir."

"Yes, a certain Mr. Gerald Warburton. Now that I have broken the news to Miss Lloyd, it will be my duty at once to communicate with Mr. Warburton—though, strange to say, I discovered, for the first time this morning, that he had already written to me during my illness, but that the letter had been purposely withheld from me. And now, Miss Lloyd," continued the lawyer, "I will give into your hands that packet which I ought to have placed there five months ago. I dare not ask you to forgive me for the wrong I have done you. Such forgiveness would be an excess of generosity such as I have no right to expect."

He took a small sealed packet from his pocket. Then he stood up, and, weak as he was, would have walked across the room to Eleanor, but she crossed the floor, hurriedly, and took the packet from his hands.

"Oh, Mr. Kelvin, I forgive you fully and willingly!" she said, with emotion. "Pray—pray do not let the thought of what is past ever distress you again!"

Then, when she saw that the packet was addressed to her in the handwriting that she remembered so well, she kissed it, with tears in her eyes, and went slowly back to her seat by Lady Dudgeon.

"Unfortunately, Sir Thomas," resumed Kelvin, "my confessions are not yet at an end, and I must crave your attention for a few minutes longer. At my recommendation, Sir Thomas, you, a little while ago, took into your service the gentleman who is now sitting there."

"Pomeroy, you mean. To be sure—to be sure. And a very useful fellow I've found him. I'm your debtor for recommending him to me, Kelvin."

"When I asked you to take him into your service, sir, I did not know one thing about him that I know now. From something that came to my knowledge only a few hours ago I have discovered that Mr. Pomeroy's chief motive in desiring to enter your service was that he might have an opportunity of being near Miss Lloyd, and of thereby winning her affections, and inducing her to become his wife."

"Bless my heart! I would never have believed that of Pomeroy—never!"

Again Kelvin looked fixedly at Olive, but she still kept her eyes turned persistently from him. She was stupefied. How had all this knowledge come to him—first the knowledge of Gerald Warburton's letter, and now of the secret arrangement between Pomeroy and herself. Had that still darker secret come to his knowledge likewise?

"I can only apologise, Sir Thomas," resumed Kelvin, "for having inadvertently been the means of introducing, under your roof, a person whose designs were such as I have mentioned, and I trust——"

"You are not to blame, Kelvin—not in the least," said the baronet. "But this is very sad—very sad indeed. What have you to say, Pomeroy, to all this?"

"Only that what Mr. Kelvin has just stated is, to a certain extent, true," said Gerald, coolly. "My inducement in seeking to enter your service was certainly the hope of being thereby brought into daily contact with Miss Lloyd, with whom I was specially desirous of becoming acquainted."

"That is easily understood," said her ladyship. "Miss Lloyd at that time was supposed to be worth twenty thousand pounds. Mr. Pomeroy's audacious candour is quite refreshing."

"I will be candid," said Gerald with an amused smile. "For me to see and become acquainted with Miss Lloyd was to love her, and when that fact became patent to me, it would not do to sail any longer under false colours. I told Miss Lloyd that I loved her—the confession slipped out one evening unawares—but the first time I met her afterwards, I confessed to her what my reasons had been for entering this house, asking her at the same time to forgive the wrong I had done her, and to forget the words I had said. From that day to this, Miss Lloyd and I were good friends: nothing more."

"Bless us all! what goings on under one's very nose, and I to know nothing about them!" cried Sir Thomas.

"But this morning altered the position of affairs entirely," went on Gerald. "You, sir, a little while ago, told me what Miss Deane had just told you—that Miss Lloyd was Miss Lloyd no longer, and had nothing in the world but her own sweet self that she could call her own. This being the case, I at once sought Miss Lloyd—found her—told her that my love was still unchanged, and would not leave her till I had won from her a promise to become my wife. That promise I hold, and I shall claim its fulfilment from her before she and I are many weeks older."

"Well done, Pomeroy! That's manly—that's as it should be!" exclaimed Sir Thomas. "I knew you would turn out a decent fellow at bottom."

Kelvin's cheeks flushed as he listened to Gerald's words. He set his teeth and glared savagely out of his hollow eyes at his successful rival. Was it for this that he had humiliated himself by his recent confession? What a fool he had been to acknowledge so much before all these people! This mere adventurer had carried away the prize for which he had striven so boldly and sacrificed so much. Bitter indeed were his thoughts just then. The emotion was too much for his strength, and he fainted.

Olive was by his side in a moment. She sank down at her cousin's knees, and took his cold hand in hers, and pressed it to her lips.

In a little while Matthew Kelvin opened his eyes and looked feebly

round, as if striving to bring to memory where he was, and whose were the faces that were bent over him. Last of all, his eyes met those of Olive Deane, and with a flash, as it were, everything came back to him. Then he saw whose hand it was that was holding his. With a look of loathing and hate that almost killed the soul within her, he flung Olive's hand from him, and, trembling in every limb, he staggered to his feet.

"Poisoner!—begone! Quit my sight for ever!" he cried, and then he fell back into his chair.

As if it were an echo, came the word "Poisoner!" from the lips of everyone in the room. Olive, who had risen to her feet when her cousin flung away her hand, staggered back as if suddenly smitten.

"Matthew!" said Olive, passionately, advancing a step nearer her cousin, "you have bid me begone, and I know there is nothing left me but to obey. All is over between us. I played for a heavy stake, and I have lost it. I leave you now, never to see you again. I go forth into the world—whither, I neither know nor care. Listen to these, my last words—listen, and believe. I would shed my heart's blood for you. Had you died through me, I would have killed myself an hour afterwards. I never loved you more than at this moment. That love I shall carry with me. Nothing can deprive me of it. Time will soften the hardness of your judgment; then sometimes you may think of me with a touch of the old kindness, and say to yourself, 'Her greatest fault was that she loved me not wisely, but too well.'"

Still keeping her eyes fixed on her cousin, but vouchsafing no glance to anyone else, she moved slowly to the door. She reached the threshold, and there for a moment she paused.

"Farewell, Matthew! farewell for ever!" she said: and her voice had a ring of pathos and despair in it that her hearers never forgot. Then she drew her veil over her face, and the next moment she was gone.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"AND YOU SHALL STILL BE LADY CLARE."

On leaving the library after the scene with Olive Deane, Gerald had whispered to Eleanor, "Don't open the sealed packet till you have seen me again. I shall be in the conservatory half an hour after luncheon."

To the conservatory Eleanor went at the time specified, taking the sealed packet with her, and there she found Gerald awaiting her arrival. There was a bright, happy look in his eyes, such as she had not seen in them since that never-to-be-forgotten evening when he first took her in his arms and told her that he loved her. He came to meet her as soon as she opened the door, took both her hands in his, and led her to a seat where they would be safe from interruption.

"I daresay you thought my request a very strange one," said Gerald,

as he sat down beside her, "but you will hear something still more strange before the day is over."

"This has been a day of surprises," answered Eleanor. "It seems like twenty years since yesterday."

"It will seem like twice twenty when you shall have heard all that I have to tell you. But before I go any further, I want you to promise me one thing."

"Only one! I think I may promise that. But tell me what it is."

"Simply this. That nothing I may tell you this afternoon will be allowed in any way to affect the promise you gave me this morning."

"The promise which you stole, you mean. And now, sir, may I ask of what strange, eventful history this may be looked on as the prologue?"

"A strange, eventful history, indeed," said Gerald. "So strange, that I hardly know how to begin it."

His tone was grave enough now. He was, in truth, puzzled how and where to begin his revelations.

"Once on a time," he said, at last—"that is to say, some five or six months ago—I was living very quietly in a little town in the south of France, when, one fine morning, I was summoned post haste to London. A certain lady, an old friend of yours, Miss Bellamy by name, was the person whose imperative summons I felt bound to obey."

"Do *you* know Miss Bellamy?" asked Eleanor, opening her eyes very wide indeed.

"Miss Bellamy used to buy me sweets when I was a very small shaver indeed. In fact, there is a legend current that she assisted at the cutting of my first tooth."

"But why did she send for you all the way from France?"

"Some seven weeks previously she had sent, through the post, to Mr. Kelvin, at Pembridge, the very sealed packet about which so much has been said to-day. That packet had been placed by Mr. Lloyd in her hands many years before, with a request that she would keep it carefully by her till after his decease. When that event took place Miss Bellamy was at Guernsey, and six months elapsed before the packet reached the hands of Mr. Kelvin. Immediately on receipt of it, his duty was to communicate to you those facts of which you were allowed to remain in ignorance till this morning. Finding, after a lapse of several weeks, that Mr. Kelvin had taken no action in the affair, Miss Bellamy sent for me, and asked me to go down to Pembridge, and ascertain from Kelvin the reason of his unaccountable inaction. I went down to Pembridge and saw Kelvin—whom I had once met years previously; but, singular as it may seem, I said nothing to him of the one particular object that had taken me there. At that time Olive Deane was living with her cousin, and it was suggested by her that, as Sir Thomas Dudgeon happened to be in want of a secretary, the place might perhaps be one that would suit me. She suggested,

too, that I, being a poor man, might improve my fortunes by marrying an heiress, the heiress in question being Miss Eleanor Lloyd. For reasons of my own, I appeared to fall in with her views. The situation was procured for me, and I made my appearance at Stammars.

"One of my reasons for acting thus was my desire to see and be near you. I had heard a great deal about you at different times, and I wanted to make your acquaintance, and judge you for myself before letting you know that I was in any way mixed up with your private affairs. I wanted, in fact, to meet you as an utter stranger."

"Before you go any further," said Eleanor, "I should like to ask you one question. When you first came down to Pembridge, did you know that I was not Mr. Lloyd's daughter, and consequently not entitled to his property?"

"I did know it."

"Then it was very wrong of you to let me live on in ignorance of my real position. You were making yourself the accomplice of Mr. Kelvin."

"Granted. But I had very special reasons for acting as I did. I suspected the existence of some plot or scheme against you which I was desirous of fathoming. Besides, I could not find it in my heart to be the one to strike the cruel blow that would deprive you of name and fortune, and shake the very foundation of your life."

"The cruelty lay in not telling me. You did me great injustice, and at the same time, you deeply wronged Mr. Warburton, the real heir."

"Oh, if Mr. Warburton's anything like a decent sort of fellow, he won't mind a bit when it's all explained to him," said Gerald, with a twinkle in his eye.

Eleanor looked excessively pained. "You talk so strangely," she said, in a faltering voice, "that I hardly understand you."

Gerald's arm went round her waist, and before she could offer any resistance, half a score kisses had been rained on her cheeks.

"Oh, my darling," he cried, "cannot you see through it? Cannot you understand it all? I—I am Gerald Warburton!"

"You Gerald Warburton!" she said, as if repeating the words mechanically after him, but without comprehending what they meant. She put his arm aside, and stood up and stared into his face, as she might have stared had she been walking in her sleep, and were now coming back to consciousness.

"You Gerald Warburton!"

He drew her down gently on to the seat again, and made one of her hands a prisoner in his.

"It is even as I have told you," he said. "It was I who Miss Bellamy sent for when she became alarmed by Kelvin's long silence. It was then, for the first time, that I heard your real history. Up to that day I had always looked upon you as my cousin. I came here under an assumed name, and I accepted the secretaryship to Sir

Thomas Dudgeon, simply that I might see you and be near you, myself unknown. To see you and be near you was to love you. I determined, if it were possible to do so, to win you in the character of a poor man. Whether I have succeeded or failed, you know best."

"All this seems very hard to believe," said Eleanor, at last. "And yet, if you tell me it is true, I suppose it must be so." She sighed, and then, in a low tone of voice, as if speaking to herself, she said: "'Lord Ronald is heir to all my lands, and I am not the Lady Clare.'"

"Yes; but what says his lordship in conclusion? 'We two will wed the morrow morn, and you shall still be Lady Clare.'"

She gazed at him sadly, wonderingly.

"Don't forget your promise," he said. "With Heaven's help, this day month we will be man and wife."

"Then you knew from the first that you were Gerald Warburton, the heir, and that I was—nobody?"

She seemed as if she wanted his further assurance before that fact would impress itself with sufficient clearness on her mind.

"I knew, dearest, what I have just told you. I heard it from Miss Bellamy before I first came down to Pembridge."

"You came to me as a poor man, and stole my heart away before I knew what had happened—stole it away, perhaps, for mere amusement. But now that you have thrown off your disguise, now that I know you for the caliph himself, the amusement is at an end, and you had better give me back a poor trifle for which you can now have no possible use."

"As if that poor trifle, as you call it, were not the one treasure which I hold as far more precious than aught else the world could offer me. I have won you, and I mean to keep you, so you may as well resign yourself to your fate."

Eleanor mused for a moment.

"Tell me this," she said. "Why did you make that confession to me one day in the library? Why did you accuse yourself of having been actuated by mercenary motives?"

"Because I had been told of the interview between young Piper and yourself. I knew, after that, what your thoughts must be concerning me; so that, all things considered, it seemed to me the best thing I could do was to cry mea culpa, even at the expense of lowering myself for a time in your estimation."

"But rather than do that, why not have confessed everything? Why not have told me then what you have told me to-day?"

"Because at that time my plans were not ripe for such a confession. Because I could not then have taken you to your father."

"My father, Gerald!" she cried, as she started to her feet. "Oh! say those words again!"

It was the first time she had called him by his right name, and it thrilled him strangely to hear it from her lips.

"Eleanor, your father—I do not speak of your adopted father this time—is still alive—is waiting and longing to see you. I had a telegram from him only a few hours ago. See, here it is." He took a telegram from his pocket, opened it, and read aloud as follows:

"Everything proved. Van Duren has confessed. Our task is at an end. Come at once, and bring my daughter with you."

These words, "my daughter," from a father whom she had never seen, moved Eleanor strangely. Her heart beat so fast that for a little while she could not speak.

"If I have a father," she stammered out at last, "why did he not send for me before? Why have you kept me from him all this time?"

"The story that I have now to tell you," answered Gerald, "is a very painful one; but that it will have a happy ending, there is proof positive in the telegram which we have just read together. It is the same story in substance as you will find told by Mr. Lloyd in the sealed packet. I think it will be better that I should tell it to you first, and leave you to read it afterwards.

"Many years ago, in a small provincial town, more than two hundred miles from this place, there lived four young ladies who had all been schoolfellows together, and who, now that they were grown up, were bosom friends. One of these young ladies married a gentleman, Ambrose Murray, by name, and a doctor by profession. You are their only child, and your name is Eleanor Murray. Another of the young ladies married Mr. Jacob Lloyd, and you were their adopted daughter. The third married my father. The fourth remained unmarried, and is your friend and mine—Miss Bellamy.

"A few months after you were born, a terrible misfortune befell your father. He was arrested on a false charge of murder, was tried, and condemned to die. The charge was a false one, dearest—don't forget that. But before the day came that would have left you fatherless, his mind gave way under the shock, and his sentence was changed into one of imprisonment for life. Your mother, frail of health and delicate from a child, found the burden of life more than she could bear, and Heaven, in its pity, took her to itself."

Gerald paused, and as he did so he felt that Eleanor was sobbing, silently, with her head still resting on his shoulder.

"Then it was, when you were left alone in the world, that Mr. Lloyd and his wife took you to their hearts and home. They had no children of their own, and they adopted you as their daughter, even to giving you their name—for, as you must remember, your father's innocence had never been proved. The evidence at the trial had been terribly against him, and the world still adjudged him to be guilty.

"Shortly after their adoption of you, Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd removed to Pembridge, where they were entire strangers, and, except Miss Bellamy, no one ever knew that you were not their own child.

"And so years went on till Mrs. Lloyd died. It was shortly after this event that Mr. Lloyd, mindful, probably, of the uncertainty of life, put into Miss Bellamy's hand the very sealed packet about which we have heard so much of late.

"All these long years Mr. Murray had been shut up in his living tomb. In the course of time his senses had mercifully been given back to him. Two or three times a year Miss Bellamy went to see him, and took him tidings of you and of the outside world. He knew that you were safe and well, and he would not let your young life be blighted by the sad story of his wrongs and sufferings.

"The first time I ever saw Mr. Murray was in Miss Bellamy's sitting-room, a few nights after my arrival in London, in answer to her summons. Your father had escaped from prison, and had come to Miss Bellamy, as the only person living whom he knew, for shelter."

"Escaped! Oh! if I had only been there to receive him!"

"He and I became friends at once when he knew that I was the son of one whom his wife had known and loved so well. Fortunately, no very extreme search was made after him, and I may so far relieve your mind at once by telling you that he has never been recaptured. In making his escape from prison, Mr. Murray's mind seemed to be possessed by one idea, and one only. That idea was the possibility, or probability, of being able to prove to the world his innocence of the dreadful crime laid to his charge twenty long years ago.

"How and by what means this great end has at last been accomplished, it would take me too long to tell you in detail now. That may be left for an after occasion. That he has succeeded completely and fully in what for a long time seemed an utterly impossible task, this telegram in his own words is ample proof. Not till he should have so succeeded would he allow you to be communicated with, or even to be made aware of his existence."

"How very strange of him! If he had but trusted me!"

"But the troubles of the past are over now. I propose to start for London by the six o'clock train this evening, and to take you with me. We shall find your father waiting at Miss Bellamy's to receive you."

"This evening! See my father this very evening!"

"Why not? Has he not sent for you?"

"I shall have to speak to Lady Dudgeon, and—and ——"

"And you will be ready equipped for your start by 5.30. I will ask Sir Thomas to let Fenton drive us to the station in the waggonette."

Eleanor stood up and pressed both her hands to her head. "I'm far from sure that it's not all a dream," she said. "Even now I hardly seem to see clearly the motives by which you were actuated. But I

have heard so many strange things to-day, that that is hardly to be wondered at."

"The two most powerful motives that actuated me were these: your father's strongly-expressed wish that you should be left unaware of his existence and of the terrible story of his life till he himself was prepared to reveal everything; and secondly, my desire to win my wife as a poor man wins his—for himself alone, and not for whatever worldly goods fortune may have encumbered him with."

"I am afraid," said Eleanor, still with a smile, "that you are a far more enigmatical character than I took you to be—that I shall find you far more difficult to understand than, in my simplicity, I ever dreamt of."

"You hold the key to my heart, and that unlocks everything. When you come to know me better, as I hope you will do some day, you will find that, like most of my fellows, I am very shallow when properly gauged. Only, perhaps, I have the art of hiding it better than some. But now I must leave you for a little while. Remember, I shall expect you to be ready by half-past five. In fact, I have already telegraphed that we shall leave for London by the six o'clock train."

He pressed her hastily to his heart, and then she fled.

It was half-past seven when Eleanor and Gerald alighted at King's Cross Station. Miss Bellamy was there to meet them. Eleanor's arms were round her neck in a moment.

"Oh, my dear Miss Bellamy!" she exclaimed, half laughing and half crying, "how happy it makes me to see you again! I thought you had run away from me for ever."

"Only for a little while, love. I had someone else to look after of late—someone who is anxiously waiting to see you."

It was a good hour's drive to Ormond Square, but to Eleanor it seemed only a few minutes. Gerald, having handed the ladies out of the cab, took his leave for a little while, promising to call again in an hour. Eleanor, still like one in a maze, and still clinging tightly to Miss Bellamy, found herself next moment indoors.

"Take off your hat, love, but don't bother about anything else just now," said Miss Bellamy.

Then they went upstairs, and then a door was flung open, and there, in the middle of the lighted room, Eleanor saw standing a tall, frail-looking man, who seemed as though he were obliged to steady himself by clinging to the back of a chair, and whose lips were working with nervous excitement.

Eleanor staggered forward into the room. Ambrose Murray met her half way, and caught her in his arms. She fell on his breast in a passion of sobs.

Miss Bellamy came gently out and shut the door.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE STRONG ROOM.

"No chance of anybody hearing him but the dead folk in the churchyard, and they'll only grin to themselves and take no notice." So muttered Pringle to himself as he stood at the foot of the stairs and listened to Van Duren's cry for help.

And he was right. So long as the doors were kept shut, Van Duren's loudest cries would not penetrate beyond the basement-floor of the old house. In the office above, people might, and did, come and go on business; but not the faintest echo of that terrible cry of despair, that was so near and yet so far away, ever reached them.

Pringle was there, as usual, to attend to the different callers, so far as it was possible for him to do so in the absence of his chief. Many were the inquiries during the day as to the probable date of Van Duren's return.

"He may be here at any time, or he may be away for another week. Most uncertain in his movements," Pringle would say to the inquirers. And as soon as they were gone he would rub his hands, and chuckle to himself and mutter: "Revenge at last! Every dog has his day, and mine has come now."

And so the day slowly wore itself through till evening came round again. Pringle shut up the office at the usual time, and then, after a hearty tea, he prepared to sally forth for the evening's enjoyment. He told himself that he would take the entire round of the haunts where he was known, indulging himself with a glass or two at each of them, and have, altogether, a very pleasant time of it.

Pringle locked the outer door, and having made sure that he had the latch-key in his pocket, he put down the kitchen gas, and let himself out by way of the front door, which he clashed to after him with a bang loud enough to wake every dismal echo that had its lodgment in the dismal old house in the churchyard.

It was close upon midnight when Jonas Pringle came picking his way carefully along the silent streets in the direction of Spur Alley. This care on his part was necessitated by the number and strength of the potations in which he had indulged during the evening. He knew quite well what he was about; he knew that he had taken more than was good for him; he knew that his course along the streets was rather a mazy one; he knew that his speech was a little thick, and that short words were infinitely preferable to long ones; but, for all that, it was only his legs that were affected: his head was still as coldly calculating as ever it had been.

He had just turned the corner of Spur Alley, and was within a few yards of the house, when suddenly a woman, who had been sitting in the shadow of the steps, sprang to her feet, stood for a moment gazing

fixedly at him, and then took to her heels and quickly disappeared round the opposite corner. A presentiment that it was his daughter shot through Pringle's heart the moment he set his eyes on her. He shouted to her to stop; but she never even turned her head. He made an abortive attempt to run after her; but that was equally unavailing. Then he sat down on the steps where is daughter had been sitting—for he felt sure that it was she—and began to cry.

He was roused by the clocks striking the half-hour after midnight. He got up, shivering from head to foot, and let himself in by means of the latch-key. He did not go downstairs, but stumbled his way to his own room, and, without undressing, flung himself on his pallet, and slept unbrokenly till long after broad daylight.

He lighted the kitchen fire and got his breakfast ready before going near his prisoner. Last night's excitement and dissipation had left him, if such a thing were possible, harder and more cruel than before. Not one single grain of pity for his wretched victim made itself felt in his heart when, after breakfast, he went and knocked at the door of the strong-room. He was still convinced that it was his daughter whom he had seen over-night, and the sight of her only served to freshen up his wrongs, and to intensify a hatred that needed no additional fuel.

"Max Van Duren, are you still alive?" he cried, rapping with his key on the door.

A deep groan was the only reply for a little while.

Pringle kept on hammering at the door. "Why don't you answer me?" he screamed.

"For Heaven's sake, Pringle, give me a drop of water, or else leave me to die in peace!" It was hardly to be recognized as the voice of Van Duren, so faint and full of anguish was it.

Pringle's only answer was a laugh.

"Pringle, I am dying!" pleaded the imprisoned man. "The wound on my head has opened afresh, and I am slowly bleeding to death. I am too weak to stand. A few hours will end everything. Give me some water—give me a pillow for my head—give me a little light—and then you may leave me to die."

"All very fine, Mr. Van, but you don't get over me with any of your dodges. Once get the door open, it would be all over with me."

"Pringle, I swear to you that I am dying—that I have not strength to walk across the floor."

"Then die," cried Pringle. "It is all you are fit for. Ask for no pity from me." And with that he strode away without waiting to hear another word, and shut the outer door behind him.

He stayed in the office as usual till evening; but he did not go near Van Duren again all day. He had found a bottle of brandy upstairs in Van Duren's room; this he appropriated, and his devotions were paid to it so often during the day that when evening came very little of

it was left. When he had closed the office, he sallied out, as on the previous evening, but still without visiting his prisoner. He had no appetite to-day; he could not eat. All he craved was more drink, and so long as he had money in his pocket there was no difficulty in getting that. Again he took what he called his rounds, and again it was close on midnight when he found himself back in Spur Alley.

He was fumbling with his latch-key, when a hand was laid lightly on his shoulder. He had heard no sound of footsteps, and he turned with a low cry of terror. He turned, and saw that it was his daughter.

"Why, Jessie—Jessie, my darling! is that you?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, it is I," said the woman, bitterly. "What have you done with Max Van Duren?"

"Oh, I've got the scoundrel in safe custody, never fear!"

"In safe custody! What do you mean?" she asked, anxiously.

"Come inside, and I'll tell you all about it."

He had succeeded in opening the door by this time, and his daughter followed him into the dark entrance-hall. They groped their way down, and entered the kitchen.

"Many a worse crib than this," said Pringle, as he turned the gas full on.

Then he stirred the fire, and drew up a chair for Jessie and another for himself, and produced a bottle of brandy.

"And now for a comfortable little confab," he said, gleefully. "I've quite a lot to tell you; and I daresay you have something to tell me."

"Suppose you tell me your news first," said the woman.

Neither in her manner towards him, nor in her mode of addressing him, was there the slightest trace of tenderness, or any token by which a stranger would have guessed that the man before her was her father, whom she had not spoken to for several years. Her hard mouth and her watchful eyes never for a moment relaxed their hardness or their watchfulness.

"Funny, wasn't it," began Pringle, rubbing his lean, yellow hands in front of the fire, but with his eyes fixed on his daughter, "that I should have been Van Duren's clerk for three years before finding out who he was?"

"And how did you find it out at last?" asked Jessie, without any apparent emotion.

"I was rooting about among his papers one day, when I found some of your letters, my dear. It was the greatest surprise I've ever had in my life."

"He has kept my letters, has he?" said the woman, in an eager, passionate way, breaking for a moment through the restraint she had hitherto put upon herself.

"He *has* kept them; so much the worse for him, as things have turned out," said Pringle, grimly.

"What did you do next?"

"I put back the letters where I had found them, and waited for him."

"And what did you do then?"

"It was only the night before last that he got back home. I had made up my mind from the first how to act. He was only there for the night. He was going to start away again next morning; but I guessed he wouldn't leave without visiting the safe in the strong-room. So, instead of going up to bed, I came down here and waited in the dark for him. I seemed to have been waiting a month, but it was only a few hours when he came. He went forward into the strong-room, and turned on the gas. Then I stole swiftly after him. He did not hear me—he did not see me till the last moment; and then it was too late. Before he could reach the iron door, I had shut it on him and turned the key."

"You locked him in?"

"I locked him in. I made him my prisoner; and there he is at this very moment."

The woman had changed colour and started to her feet when her father made this disclosure. But another thought seemed to strike her, and she sat down again, her ashy face turned full upon him, and a strange, half-savage, half-defiant look in her eyes, which it was just as well that the old man did not notice.

Gradually the warmth of the fire, and the brandy he had taken and was still taking, had a somnolent effect upon Pringle. He found his eyelids closing involuntarily.

"I don't think an hour or two's snooze would be a bad sort of thing," he said.

"Where is this strong-room that you talk about?" asked Jessie.

"Why, close by here—on the bottom floor—just at the end of that passage."

"And the keys—who keeps them?"

"Who should keep them but me? I've got them safe enough, never you fear." And he tapped his pocket to verify the fact.

He poured himself out some more brandy, and when he had drunk it she assisted him to the sofa, lowered the gas a little, and then took up her own position in the big easy-chair on the opposite side of the fire-place.

A few minutes later, her father's deep, regular breathing told her that he was fast asleep.

Then she crossed noiselessly over to where he was lying, and began to feel for the pocket that held his keys. She was not long in finding what she wanted. Then she lighted a candle, and taking the candlestick in one hand and the two keys in the other (after giving a last look at her father), she set out in search of the strong-room.

The little Dutch clock in the kitchen was on the stroke of eight when Jonas Pringle opened his eyes. He opened them, rubbed them, shut them, and opened them again. He might well stare and ask himself whether he had not taken leave of his senses. On a mattress in front of the kitchen fire, a coverlet thrown over him, lay the form of Max Van Duren. His eyes were shut and he was breathing heavily. Pringle was still staring at this terrible object, and trying to pull his wits together, when his attention was attracted by the noise of footsteps descending the stairs, and next moment Jessie ushered into the room a stranger, who at once crossed to where Van Duren was lying, and gazed fixedly down on him. The stranger was, in fact, a doctor whom Jessie had summoned by bribing a passing milk-boy to go and fetch him. Van Duren was an utter stranger to him.

"Who are you, and what have you come for?" screamed Pringle. "Get out of this, or it will be worse for you! I'll have no thieving quacks here."

Jessie took her father by the shoulders and pressed him down by main force on to the sofa.

"Speak another word at your peril," she said sternly. "Disturb this gentleman again, and as sure as I am what I am, I'll have you locked up in there—in there, do you understand?" and she pointed in the direction of the strong-room.

There was something in his daughter's face that cowed him—that frightened him even. He had never seen such an expression on any other face. He sat down without a word.

The doctor was down on one knee by this time, examining the unconscious man.

"How did he come by this terrible wound on his head?" he asked, presently, "and why has he been allowed to sink so low? Some one ought to have been called in two days ago."

"It's only about two days since he got home," said the woman, "and he brought the wound with him. How he came by it nobody knows but himself. Then he was accidentally"—with a glance at her father—"shut up in the room where he keeps his books and things, and couldn't help himself, and there I found him about two o'clock this morning."

"Was he conscious when you found him? Did he know you?"

"Yes."

"Why did you not send for medical assistance as soon as you found him?"

"Because he wouldn't let me—he wouldn't hear of it."

"More fool he," said the doctor brusquely. "What did you give him to eat or drink?"

"All that I could persuade him to take was a little brandy-and-water."

"Well, I can do nothing for him till he wakes," said the doctor, as he rose to his feet. "I may tell you, he appears, so far as I can judge at present, to be in about as bad a way as it is possible for a man to be. I don't think it advisable to disturb him, as this sleep may do him good. I will call again about ten o'clock. Should he awake before then, send me word; and till I arrive, keep on giving him a teaspoonful of brandy every few minutes." With that the doctor went.

Jessie was kneeling by Van Duren's head, and she never moved to let the doctor out. Pringle cowed before her, and muttering something to the effect that a good wash would freshen him up, he slunk out of the room and shuffled upstairs, coughing painfully as he went.

Jessie resumed her watch by the unconscious man, bathing his brows now and again with a little vinegar. Presently he opened his eyes and gazed up wonderingly into her face. Then he tried to raise himself on his elbow, but fell back with a groan. Jessie gave him a little brandy, and that seemed to revive him.

"Where am I? what has happened?" he murmured.

"Hush! don't talk now," said Jessie. "The doctor will be here in a little while, and give you something to revive you."

"The doctor? The—— Ah! everything comes back to me now. It was you who opened my dungeon, and helped me, bit by bit, to crawl here. What good angel sent you to me, Jessie?"

Then, before she could answer, he began to mutter to himself in German, a language which he very rarely spoke, and evidently knew her no longer.

At this moment there came a sound of loud knocking at the front door. At the noise, Van Duren again turned his eyes on Jessie.

He looked at her as he had never looked at her before—with a pathos and tenderness indescribable. But he did not speak.

Jessie's quick ears had heard her father open the door in answer to the knocking, and now there was a sound of footsteps coming down the stone stairs that led to the kitchen. Next minute the door was pushed open, and three men came into the room. One of them was Peter Byrne, and the other two were members of the police force in plain clothes. Byrne was startled at the sight before him, but he did not lose his presence of mind.

"There, gentlemen, is the man you are in search of. This is Max Van Duren, formerly known by the name of Max Jacoby."

One of the officers advanced. "Max Jacoby, you are charged with being the murderer of one Paul Stilling, at Tewkesbury, many years ago, and I hold a warrant for your arrest."

"A warrant for my arrest!" echoed Van Duren, feebly. "You have come too late, gentlemen—too late!"

His eyes closed once more; he breathed three or four times, and then not again.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CONCLUSION.

On the sands at Boulogne-sur-Mer. Time, a sunny afternoon. The persons are Mrs. Kelvin and her son. The lady is half sitting, half reclining, in the Bath chair in which she has been wheeled down to the sands. Matthew Kelvin is sitting on a camp-stool close by his mother, smoking a cigarette, and dividing his attention between the bathers and a lazy skimming of the London papers, which have just come to hand. He is looking infinitely better than when we saw him last, and his mother thinks that if she can only persuade him to stay away from that odious business for another month, he will become as strong and hearty as ever he was.

Mrs. Kelvin's attention, like that of her son, is half distracted from the gay scene before her. The steamer has brought her several letters, which she is reading intermittently, smiling to herself now and then as she reads, and anon lifting her eyes to note the latest arrival on the sands, or to watch for a moment kaleidoscopic changes in the ever-varying groups of loungers and bathers with which she is surrounded. There is one letter, however, that she has kept till the last. Her face clouds as she opens it. She glances at Matthew, and sees that he is still busy with his newspapers. The letter does not take her long to read, and, with a little sigh, she puts it back into its envelope. The sigh rouses Matthew—he looks up.

"Matthew," says the old lady, very gravely, "I have had a letter this morning from Olive Deane."

He turns quickly round; and his face seems to harden as he turns.

"And has she really dared to write to you?" he says, sternly. "Does she think that the past can be so soon forgotten?"

"My dear, you are not like yourself when you talk in that way," answers Mrs. Kelvin, as she lays her hand caressingly on her son's shoulder. "I never rightly understood the reason of that terrible quarrel between you and Olive. You were too ill for me to question you much at the time, and since you have been better the mere mention of Olive's name has seemed so distasteful to you that I have spoken of her as little as possible. But to say that I should not like to know how it happened that you fell out so strangely, would be to say that I am not a woman."

Under his breath Mr. Kelvin calls himself by a very strong name for having spoken so hastily. He has carefully concealed from his mother the fact of Olive Deane having been implicated in any way with regard to his long illness. He has dreaded the effect such a revelation might have upon her. He has allowed her to surmise and wonder as to the origin of their sudden estrangement, but he has never really enlightened her.

"Olive went off to Stammars one morning with a letter from you," resumes the old lady. "An hour later, you rush off after her, although you have not been out of your room for two months. You come back after a time, but Olive does not. Next day she sends for her boxes, but from the hour when she set out for Stammars till now, I have never set eyes on Olive Deane."

"Yes, it must have seemed strange to you," says Mr. Kelvin, after a pause: "but the subject was such a very painful one that I always felt reluctant to mention it."

"You never thought, dear, how painful it must be to me to be left in such a state of doubt and uncertainty."

"I know that I ought to have told you long ago. I will tell you now." She pauses while he looks at his watch and folds up his newspaper. "The facts of the case can be told you in very few words," he says. "Olive Deane, during the time that I was ill, suppressed a very important private letter that had been sent to me through the post."

"That was wrong, very wrong indeed," says the old lady, gravely. "Had any other than you told me of it, I could not have believed them."

"That morning when she went to Stammars, it was with a letter from me addressed to Miss Lloyd. That letter she also suppressed, then having, I presume, opened it and read it. I was very angry with her indeed. I spoke my mind very strongly on the point, and we parted—never, I hope, to meet again."

Mrs. Kelvin does not speak, and Matthew, looking up, sees that her eyes are full of tears. "How would she feel, and what would she say, if she knew everything?" he asks himself. "But she must never be told."

"I thought it strange that she never once mentions your name in her letter," says Mrs. Kelvin, as she wipes her eyes. "It is just as well to know that the girl is not without a home. She writes me that she has accepted a situation with a family who are going out to the Hague in a couple of months; so that she is not likely to trouble any of us in time to come."

At this moment, who should march gravely up, and raise his hat with what he firmly believes to be an air of the most refined fashion, but Mr. Pod Piper! Mr. Piper wears a wideawake and a fashionable tweed suit. He has taken care to button up his coat two minutes ago, so as to hide from Mr. Kelvin's eyes the elaborate filigree chain, of Palais-Royal workmanship, which is festooned across his waistcoat.

"Why, Piper, is that you?" says Mr. Kelvin, in his most pleasant voice. "Got back safe and sound, eh? How have you enjoyed yourself?"

"Oh, splendidly, sir!—Thanks to you. Never had such a holiday before. Paris is a wonderful place, sir!"

"I suppose you speak French like a native by this time, eh?"

"Not quite that, sir. I know about fifty words, and I've got along famously. Fifty words are quite enough to go from one end of the country to the other with: a smile and a shrug go a long way with the French."

"I think you had better not cross till to-morrow morning," says Mr. Kelvin. "You can then take over with you some papers for Mr. Bray. We dine at six, and you must dine with us to-day."

Pod stammers out something—he hardly knows what—and colours up to the roots of his hair. Dine with the governor! What will they say at Pembridge when he tells them? He feels himself grow an inch taller in two minutes. After a few kind words from Mrs. Kelvin, he is dismissed till six o'clock.

Pod's trip to Paris is accounted for by the fact of his employer having made him a present of a twenty-pound note and a week's holiday. Ten pounds out of the twenty Pod has given to his mother. With the remaining ten, and some previous earnings, he has enjoyed himself for a week in Paris.

"You don't mean to say, Matthew, that that boy has been to Paris all alone?"

"I suppose he has. Why not?"

"Consider his age. Consider the temptations of such a place."

"Oh, I would trust Piper anywhere. He's got the head of a man of thirty on those boy's shoulders of his."

"He seems a shrewd boy, certainly. You appear to have taken a quite uncommon interest in him of late, Matthew."

"Yes, I do feel a great interest in him. It is not often I take a fancy, but I've taken a fancy to Piper, and I mean to put him in the way of making his fortune by having him articled to a first-class legal firm, and afterwards by purchasing a partnership for him, or else by setting him up on his own account."

Mrs. Kelvin knew nothing of the great service which Pod Piper had rendered her son. She did not know that, but for Pod's shrewd thoughtfulness and presence of mind, she might perhaps no longer have had a son. But Matthew Kelvin knew, and did not forget.

"But if you want to have young Piper articled, why not article him to yourself, Matthew?"

"Because I think we shall be better apart, and that it will be better for him to leave Pembridge for a few years. Because, too ——"

"Because what, dear?"

"Because I have some serious thoughts of retiring from business before long, mother. I am rich enough to give it up. I shall never marry, and have children, and—I am ambitious. Because my father and grandfather lived and died two quiet country lawyers, that is no reason why I should be content to do the same. To-day is not as

yesterday. I have larger views and different aims than theirs. I am sick and tired to death of the drudgery necessitated by a business like mine. I want to get into Parliament, I want to ——"

"Into Parliament, Matthew! How proud I should be to see you there!"

"Would you? Then I hope you will see me there before this time next year. I know for a fact that Sir Thomas means to give up his seat next spring. Some of his chief supporters have been coquetting with me already. But if I become M.P., I must give up my profession, and devote the whole of my time to my new duties. I hope to make my mark yet before I die."

The tide has been coming in very quickly, and a bigger wave than ordinary now comes creaming up nearly to their feet. They must move at once.

"It is time to go; the breeze is growing chilly," says Mrs. Kelvin. "You must tell me more of your plans and thoughts to-morrow."

As they turn the corner of the Etablissement, they meet and pass three people—a lady and two gentlemen—who are on the way to the sands.

"What a remarkably handsome woman!" says Mrs. Kelvin to her son.

"Just my thought, mother. I wonder what countrywoman she is—not English, certainly."

But in saying this, Matthew Kelvin is mistaken. The lady who has attracted the admiration of himself and his mother is, in fact, none other than our old acquaintance, Miriam Byrne—now Mrs. James Baron. The gentlemen with her are her father and her husband.

Mr. Kelvin and Peter Byrne have never met, and are unaware of each other's existence. They have both been prominent actors in that strange drama which has had Eleanor Lloyd and Gerald Warburton for its central figures—a drama which must of necessity have worked itself out in an altogether different manner had neither of them, or only one of them, played a part in it. Yet, to-day, they pass each other, knowing nothing of all this, each going his own road, never to meet again. So runs the world away.

Mr. Byrne looks younger and more jaunty than ever. Nearly everyone turns to look at Miriam. Various types of French and English beauty are by no means uncommon on the sands at Boulogne; but Miriam's peculiar style of face is very rarely seen in the north of Europe, and it strikes the gay crowd with all the freshness of novelty.

Miriam is dressed in the latest fashion of sea-side extravagance. She is quite conscious of the sensation which she creates as she moves slowly along, but she has been used to be stared at from the time that she can remember at all. To be admired seems to her as natural as to

breathe: admiration is her birthright, and she accepts it with the serene self-unconsciousness of a queen accepting the homage of her subjects.

Mr. James Baron is one of those fair-haired, blue-eyed young Saxons who seem all to have been cast in the same mould, and of whom there is little or nothing to be said. But he is Miriam's choice, and she loves him, and that is enough.

The services rendered Ambrose Murray by Peter Byrne and his daughter have been most liberally rewarded. But, in addition to this, some old mining shares, which Byrne had long looked upon as utterly worthless, have—to use his own phrase—"turned up trumps" at last, and the old poverty-stricken days in Amelia Terrace are at an end for ever. Through Gerald's influence, a capital situation has been found for young Baron with a large wine firm at Bordeaux; so they are all keeping holiday together for a little while before the young couple set out for their new home.

The scene changes. The accident ward in a London hospital. Time, eight p.m.

On a pallet in one corner of the ward, between which and the long row of other pallets stands a big black screen, lies all that remains of Jonas Pringle. He has breathed his last but a few minutes ago. Kneeling on the floor, her face buried in her hands, is the dead man's daughter. Run over in the streets when drunk, he has been brought here early in the afternoon. He is just able to tell his daughter's address, and then he lapses into unconsciousness. He never opens his eyes or speaks again, but, with his daughter's hand clasped in his, he sleeps himself away as gently as though he were a little child hushed on its mother's breast.

Jessie is roused at last by a hand laid gently on her shoulder. She looks up, and sees one of the visiting sisters of mercy. She rises to her feet, and the sister, who has thought she was crying, is surprised to see that her eyes are dry and tearless.

"He was your father," says the sister, with a slight touch of surprise in her voice.

"Yes, he was my father," said Jessie, gently.

Then she asks for a pair of scissors, and having cut off a lock of her father's hair, she wraps it in a piece of paper, and places it inside the bosom of her dress. Then, still with dry and tearless eyes, she kisses the dead man's cold forehead.

"I've got money at home," she says to the sister, who is standing quietly by. "The parish mustn't lay a finger on him. I'll bury him myself."

Then, with a muttered good night, she turns and goes. She stands for a moment at the hospital door, gazing up and down the rainy, lamp-lit street, and shudders as she gazes. Then she draws her scanty

shawl more closely round her, and stepping out into the rain, she hurries away—whither?

Again the scene changes. The great drawing-room at Stammars. Time, nine p m of a January evening.

It is Miss Sophy's birthday, and there is a large gathering of young people to celebrate the event. There are only five grown-up persons in the room, and all of them are known to us. First and foremost come Sir Thomas and Lady Dudgeon, looking exactly as they have looked any time these ten years. That thin, dreamy-looking, white-haired gentleman in the corner, with a very tiny young lady on his knee, who is resting from her romps for a few minutes, is Mr. Ambrose Murray. That dark, foreign-looking gentleman, and that handsome lady, who are walking through a quadrille with two partners of the mature age of twelve, are Mr. and Mrs. Warburton. They two, together with Mr. Murray, having eaten their Christmas dinner with dear, kind-hearted Miss Bellamy, have come down for a month's visit to Stammars.

Mr. Murray can now bear his own name, and is as free to come and go as anyone. Acting on the advice of friends, he went back to the asylum from which he had escaped, and gave himself up. A case was then prepared for the Home Secretary, and that high functionary, having considered the same at his leisure, had been graciously pleased to advise that Ambrose Murray be granted a free pardon, and that the conviction recorded against him be considered null and void.

Eleanor and Gerald have been married three months, and are as happy as they deserve to be. This morning they walked through the lanes and fields, as far as the little churchyard in which Jacob Lloyd sleeps his last. Eleanor always feels as if she must have had two fathers—one in the past and one in the present. With tears in her eyes she talks to her husband of the dear father who lies here, and she kisses the wreath of everlastings she has brought with her before she lays it gently on his grave.

When ten o'clock strikes, the juveniles troop to supper, and Sir Thomas buttonhole's Gerald, and takes him off to the smoking-room. There is something on his mind which he is evidently bursting to confide to Gerald.

"Look here, Pomeroy," he says—he can't forget the old familiar name—"I'm going to tell you something that I've not told to anybody, and that I wouldn't have her ladyship know just yet for the world. What do you think? I've made up my mind to resign my seat!"

"You do indeed surprise me!" says Gerald.

"I mention this to you because I think it would be a good chance for you to try to get into Parliament yourself. You know, Pomeroy, I always said you were cut out for an M.P."

"You flatter me, Sir Thomas. All the same, I'm greatly obliged to you for honouring me with your confidence in this matter, although I shall not be able to do what you have so kindly suggested. My wife and I have made up our minds to travel for a couple of years before I settle down to anything."

It need hardly be said that Eleanor stands higher in the favour of Lady Dudgeon than ever she did before. If she is penniless herself, has she not a husband who is worth twenty thousand pounds? Her ladyship could afford to condone much in face of such a golden fact as that. Not that there is anything to condone in the case of Eleanor, as matters have turned out; but had it unhappily been the case that Gerald was not his uncle's heir, it may be feared that Eleanor's offences would have been altogether past condonation.

The evening wears on, and one after another the young people take their leave, till only a few are left, who are not going home till morning. These, tired out at last with dancing and romping, gather round Ambrose Murray, and beg of him to tell them a fairy tale. So he tells them a tale in which there is a giant and a dwarf, and a castle with walls of brass, and a magic horn that hangs by the gate, and a beautiful princess who is shut up in a dungeon, and a brave knight who has many wonderful adventures and hairbreadth escapes.

When the tale is done, being a little weary, he bids the children a kindly good-night, then he shakes hands with Sir Thomas and Lady Dudgeon, and asks them to excuse his retiring. Eleanor goes with him to the foot of the stairs, where they kiss each other and say good-night. Eleanor stands and watches him as he goes slowly up the wide staircase, looking very tired, she thinks. He turns when he reaches the landing, and smiles, and waves his hand to her. Next moment he is gone, and she hurries back to the drawing-room.

When Ambrose Murray reaches his room, he rakes the glowing embers together, and puts out his candle. He often sits in the dark for hours. Then he draws up one of the blinds, and looks out. The atmosphere is very clear, and the sky is brilliant with stars. He stands there for a long time, gazing up at the stars with a rapt look on his face. His thoughts are evidently far away—far away, it may be, from earth, and all its weariness and troubles. By-and-by he goes and kneels down by the side of his bed, and clasps his hands.

And there next morning they find him still kneeling, still with clasped hands, and with a look of ineffable peace on his white, worn face—of that peace which passeth all understanding.

THE END.

"PLEASE DRIVE SLOWLY."

By Anne Beale.

"PLEASE drive slowly," are the significant words printed in large letters on a board outside the Hospital for Women in Soho Square. They are indicative of the mute appeal for ease and quiet, continually, if silently and prayerfully, made within. Although the house is roomy and high, and its walls thick, the rattling of wheels and the hubbub of voices penetrate to the wards, and add to the distress of the patients. But everything is done that Christian love and foresight can do to deaden sound, and mitigate pain.

It was spring when we paid our first visit to the hospital, and it was impossible not to be struck by the cool repose of the entrance hall, and the quiet manner of the porter. There was also the delicate perfume of flowers; for some kindly, unknown hand had laid bunches of violets and primroses on the secretary's desk, together with a cheque.

The fragrance, the calm, and the cool, fell soothingly on the senses after the atmosphere and noise of Soho. But we were soon recalled to the knowledge that sorrow and suffering were near, by a lift placed in the hall for the convenience and benefit of the afflicted. Here the patient is laid on bed or mattrass, and drawn gently up to her destined ward without a jolt or exertion. Doctors, matron, and nurses are not however so fortunate; for the ascent and descent of the innumerable stairs of the many stories, from "garret to basement," is fatiguing indeed. But the text "Love one another," conspicuous in the matron's room, gives the key-note of the harmony that sets the soul of the hale in unison with her ministrations to the sick.

We were permitted to visit the different wards, some of which are devoted to patients rich enough to pay for the benefits they receive; others are free. They bear the names of persons who have variously benefited the hospital. There is the Protheroe Smith ward—the Alexandra—the Princess Mary Adelaide—the Princess Christian—the Palmerston—the Cholmondeley—the Ranfurley—the Cadogan—the Locock, and others, all of whose names speak for themselves; and last, if not least, the Shaftesbury ward. We entered this and found it—empty! It was a free ward containing ten beds, and closed for lack of funds. It is sad to see fifty or sixty women gathered into one house, all of whom are suffering from terrible internal disease; but sadder still to think of that empty *free* ward, into which hundreds would thankfully come if only it had funds enough to admit tenants who cannot themselves afford to pay.

The other free ward was, however, full almost to overflowing, being twice the size of the Shaftesbury. Not only its cleanliness, airiness,

and quiet, but its brightness, were remarkable. The scarlet cloaks or jackets worn by the patients, the light, coloured coverlets thrown over the beds, the illuminated texts on the walls—all contributed to temper suffering. But above all, the flowers! A box had just come from the Mildmay-Park Flower-Mission, and the pleasure these tender ministers of spring brought with them must be witnessed to be understood. They were distributed throughout the hospital, and such of the patients as were able to be up, were arranging them in vases, while they lay on the counterpane of such as were in bed.

One girl of seventeen in the free ward was sitting up in bed putting together a nosegay of lilies of the valley. Some were gathered in her hand, some lay on her counterpane. An older woman sat by her side watching her. The girl was very beautiful, and recovering from an illness that all had expected would cause her death. Her face was colourless, and her long fair hair hung soft and smooth over the red jacket. Poet or painter never imagined a fairer picture. She was a teacher, and smiled as she said she hoped to leave the hospital in a few weeks, though she was very happy there.

A woman in another bed was weeping over some violets, and said they had brought back the days when she had gathered them, as a child, in her country home.

But many of the sufferers were not equal to the enjoyment even of those meek-eyed, peace-bringing ministrants—innocent flowers. Some lay with eyes closed or face hidden, either bearing the effects of some painful operation, or expecting one. While a few were convalescent, many were still suffering; but all bore testimony to the loving care and watchfulness of doctors, sisters, and nurses, and as a rule their cheerfulness was remarkable.

In the Alexandra ward we were greeted with the glad sound of hymns. Here were four patients, all young, though all married. They were in bed, but engaged in various handicrafts. Crimson jackets, counterpanes and screens, gave an especially bright effect to this room, and the Princess, to whom its name is due, would have rejoiced to see herself associated with such happy spirits. The one who was singing was an Irish lady, who said she had lately come from Ireland to the hospital, having only heard of it a short time before she left her native country. She said she wished that it could be made more generally known there, as many would thankfully cross the sea to ensure such good as she had gained. She was anticipating returning cured to her husband and children. Her companions said she had cheered them by her hymns and happy spirit. One of the latter was working a pair of slippers as a surprise for her husband on their wedding-day. She hoped she should be permitted to finish them in time. If sickness sometimes brings forth the bitter, it also engenders the sweet.

One gentle-looking patient said it was her birthday. Another, with

a face beaming with gratitude, said "I am to leave to-morrow, cured! After seven years of intense agony and consultation with many physicians, I am pronounced well. And under God, I owe it to Dr. Protheroe Smith."

On the other hand, alas! there was one who was to leave on the morrow, incurable. She burst into tears as she said so. Her kind doctor tried to cheer her by pointing to the Great Physician. The hand laid affectionately on the shoulder, the comforting text whispered soothingly, and the sympathetic manner and tone, helped to stay the tears, and elevate the mind of the sufferer whose hopes of earthly existence were vanishing slowly but surely.

Roaming from room to room, and story to story of the cool, quiet house, we happened on the words outside a closed door, "Please walk lightly." They were as suggestive as those outside the hospital, for within, the tired night-nurses sought the rest voluntarily sacrificed by day. How little those who are free to wander where they will, appreciate the long-suffering of such as devote themselves to waiting on the sick. It was well to learn from the lips of one of these that she had been herself a patient in the hospital for ten weeks, and having, by the grace of God, been restored within its walls, she was devoting herself and her remaining years to aiding in the restoration of others. Perhaps the readers of this sketch may likewise be interested in learning that it was from this hospital that Miss Mittendorff went—relieved, if not cured—to begin her Kindergarten, in Kilburn Square, for the benefit of orphaned or deserted children: thus rendering to the Lord the life He had graciously spared.

It was waxing late when we left the topmost story of the hospital, and slowly descended the wide staircase. A cheerful scene presented itself through the open doors in many of the wards. Small parties of convalescents were seated at tea. Some of the sisters and nurses had also seized the interval to take their ever-hasty meal, and a joyous hymn sounded over the board. They are often compelled either to eat and drink standing, or to relinquish the necessary sustenance altogether. As we glanced into the rooms in passing, the effect seemed cool and agreeable. The flowers in the centre of each table, the bright colours prevailing in dress and furniture, and the quiet figures of the nurses moving to and fro, left rather a pleasing than a painful impression. This was heightened by a farewell interview with the kind and experienced superintendent. Though wearied with a long day's labour, this lady was yet ready to welcome and speed the parting guest.

The hospital needs support. One ward was empty for want of funds. Cannot those who may possess them contribute their mite to help to fill it? For, assuredly, it would be conferring an inestimable benefit upon some of our suffering fellow-creatures.

SEEN IN THE MOONLIGHT.

'I TELL you it is," repeated Tod. "One can't mistake Temple, even at a distance."

"But this man looks so much older than he. And he has whiskers! Temple had none."

"And has not Temple got older, do you suppose; and don't whiskers sprout and grow? You were always a muff, Johnny. That is Slingsby Temple."

We had gone by rail to Whitney Hall, and were walking up from the station. The Squire sent us to ask after Sir John's gout. It was a broiling hot day in the middle of summer. On the lawn before the house, with some of the Whitneys, stood a stranger—a little man, young, dark, and upright.

Tod was right, and I wrong. It was Slingsby Temple. But I thought him much altered: older-looking than his years, which numbered twenty-five, and more sedate and haughty than ever. We had neither seen nor heard of him since quitting Oxford.

"Oh, he is regularly in for it this time," said Bill Whitney, in answer to inquiries about his father, as they shook hands with us. "He has hardly ever had such a bout: can only lie in bed and groan. Temple, don't you remember Todhetly and Johnny Ludlow?"

"Yes, I do," answered Temple, holding out his hand to me first, and passing Tod to do it. But that was Slingsby Temple's way. I was of no account, and therefore it did not touch his pride to notice me.

"I am glad to see you again," he said, cordially enough, turning to Tod, which was quite a gracious acknowledgment for *him*.

But it surprised us to see him there. The Whitneys had no acquaintance with the Temples; neither had he and Bill been particular friends at college. Whitney explained it after luncheon, when we were sitting outside the windows in the shade, and Temple was pacing the shrubbery with Helen.

"I fancy it's a gone case," said Bill, nodding towards them.

"Oh, William, you should not say it," struck in Anna in a tone of remonstrance. "It is not sure—and not right to Mr. Temple."

"Not say it to Tod and Johnny! Rubbish! Why, they are like ourselves, Anna. I say I think it is going to be a case."

"Helen with another beau!" cried free Tod. "How has it all come about?"

"The mother and Helen have been staying at Malvern, you know," said Whitney. "Temple turned up at the same hotel, the Foley Arms, and they struck up an intimacy. I went over for the last week, and

was surprised to see how thick he was with them. The mother, who is more unsuspicious than a goose, told Temple in her hospitable way, when they were saying good-bye, that she should be glad to see him if ever he found himself in these benighted parts: and I'll be shot if at the end of five days he was not here! If Helen's not the magnet, I don't know what else can be."

"He appears to like her; but it may be only a temporary fancy that will pass away; it ought not to be talked of," reiterated Anna. "It may come to nothing."

"It may, or may not," persisted Bill.

"Will she consent to have him?" I asked.

"She'd be simple if she didn't," said Bill. "Temple would be a jolly fine match for any girl. Good in all ways. His property is large, and he is as sober and steady as any parson. Always has been."

I was not thinking of Temple's eligibility; that was undeniable; but of Helen's inclinations. Some time before, she had gone in for a love affair: which would not do at any price, caused some stir at the Hall, and came to signal grief: though I have not time to tell of it here. Whitney caught the drift of my thoughts.

"*That's* over and done with, Johnny. She'd never let its recollection spoil other prospects. You may trust Helen Whitney for that. She is as shallow-hearted as ——"

"For shame, William!" remonstrated Anna.

Tod looked at Anna, and laughed gently. "What's this about a boating tour?" he inquired of Whitney. It had been alluded to at lunch-time.

"Temple's going in for one, with some more fellows," was the reply. "He has asked me to be one. We mean to do some of the larger rivers, take our tent, and encamp on the banks at night."

"What a jolly spree!" cried Tod, his face flushing with delight. "How I should like it!"

"I wish to goodness you were coming! But Temple has made up his party. It is his affair, you know. He talks of being out a month."

"One gets no chance in this slow place," cried Tod fiercely. "I'll emigrate, and go tiger hunting. Is it a secret, this boating affair?"

"A secret! No."

"What made you kick me under the table, then, when I would have asked particulars at luncheon?"

"Because the mother was present. She has got all sorts of queer notions in her head—mothers always have—that the boat will be found bottom upwards some day, and we under it. So we say as little about it as possible before her."

"I see," nodded Tod. "Look here, Bill, I should like to get up a boating party myself: it sounds glorious. How do you set about it?—and where can you get a boat?"

"Temple knows," said Bill, "I don't. Let's go and ask him."

They went across the grass, leaving me alone with Anna. She and I were the best of friends, as the reader may remember, and exchanged many a little confidence with one another that the world knew nothing of.

"Should you like it for Helen, Anna?" I asked, indicating her sister and Slingsby Temple.

"Yes, I think I should," she answered. "But William was not warranted in speaking as he did. Mr. Temple will only be here a few days longer: when he leaves we may never see him again."

"But he is evidently taken with Helen. He shows that he is. And when a man of Slingsby Temple's disposition allows himself to betray anything of the kind, rely upon it he means something."

"Did you like him at Oxford, Johnny?"

"Well —— I did and did not," was my hesitating answer. "He was reserved, close, proud, and unsociable; and no man displaying those qualities can be much liked. On the other hand, he was of exemplary conduct, deserving respect from all, and receiving it."

"I think he is religious," said Anna, her voice taking a lower tone.

"Yes, I always thought him that. I fancy their mother brought them up so. But Temple is the last man in the world to display it."

"What with papa's taking up two rooms to himself now he has the gout, and all of us being at home, mamma was a little at fault which chamber to give Mr. Temple. There was no time for much arrangement, for he came without notice; so she just turned Harry out of his room, which used to be poor John's, you know, and put Mr. Temple there. That night Harry chanced to go up to bed later than the rest of us. He forgot his room had been changed, and went straight into his own. Mr. Temple was kneeling down in prayer, and a Bible lay open on the table. Mamma says it is not all young men who say their prayers and read the Bible now-a-days."

"Not by a good many, Anna. Yes, Temple is good, and I hope Helen will get him. She will have position, too, as his wife, and a large income."

"He came into his estate this year when he was five-and-twenty. But, Johnny, I don't like one thing: William says there was a report at Oxford that the Temples never live to be even middle-aged men."

"Some of them have died young, I believe. But, that's no reason why they all should."

"And—there's a superstition attaching to the family, is there not?" continued Anna. "A ghost that appears; or something of that? What is it?"

I hardly knew what to answer. How vividly the words brought back poor Fred Temple's communication to me on the subject, and his subsequent death!

"You don't speak," said she. "Won't you tell me what it is?"

"It is this, Anna: but I daresay it's all nonsense. When one of the Temples is going to die, the spirit of the head of the family who last died is said to appear and beckon to him; a sign that his own death is near. Down in their neighbourhood people call it the Temple superstition."

"I am glad I am not a Temple; I should be always fearing I might see the sight," observed Anna, a sad, thoughtful look on her gentle face.

"Oh no, you'd not, Anna. The Temples themselves don't think of it, and don't believe in it. Slingsby does not, at any rate. His brother Fred told me at Oxford that nobody must presume to allude to it in Slingsby's presence."

"Fred? He died at Oxford, did he not?"

"Yes, he died there, poor fellow. Thrown from his horse. I saw it happen, Anna."

But I said nothing to her of that curious scene to which I had been a witness a night or two before the accident—when poor Fred, to Slingsby's intense indignation, fancied he saw his father on the college staircase; fancied his father beckoned to him. It was not a thing to talk of.

The afternoon passed. We said good-bye to them all, including Temple, and started for home again. Tod was surly and cross. He had come out in a temper and he was going back in one.

Tod liked his own way. Nobody in the world resented interference more than he: and just now he and the Squire were at war. Some twelve months before, Tod had dropped into a five-hundred pound legacy from a distant relative. It was now ready to be paid to him. The Squire wished it paid over to himself, that he might take care of it; Tod wanted to be grand, and open a banking account of his own. For the past two days the argument had held out on both sides, and this morning Tod had lost his temper. Lost, it was, again now, but on another score.

"Slingsby Temple might as well have invited me to join the boating lot!" he broke out to me, as we drew near home. "He knows I am an old hand."

"But if his party is made up, Tod? Whitney said it was."

"Rubbish! Made up! They could as well make room for another. And much good some of them are, I daresay! I can't remember that Slingsby ever took an oar in his hand at Oxford. All he went in for was star-gazing—and chapels—and lectures. And look at Bill Whitney! He hates rowing."

That night, after we got in, the subject of the money grievance cropped up again. The Squire was smoking his pipe at the open window; Mrs. Todhetley sat by the centre table and the lamp, hem-

ming a strip of muslin. Tod, open as the day on all subjects, abused Temple's "churlishness" for not inviting him to make one of the boating party, and declared he'd organize one of his own, which he could readily do, now he was not tied for money. That remark set the Squire on.

"Ay, that's just where it would be, Joe," said he. "Let you keep the money in your own fingers, and we should soon see what it would end in."

"What would it end in?" demanded Tod.

"Ducks and drakes."

Tod tossed his head. "You think I am a child still, I believe, father."

"You are no better where the spending of money's concerned," said the Squire, taking a long whiff. "Few young men are. Their fathers know that, and keep it from them as long as they can. And that's why so many are not let come into possession of their estates before they are five-and-twenty. This young Temple, it seems, did not come into his; Johnny, here, does not."

"I should like to know what more harm it would do for the money to lie in my name in the Old Bank than if it lay in yours?" argued Tod. "Should I be drawing cheques on purpose to get rid of it? That's what you seem to suppose, father."

"You'd be drawing them to spend," said the Pater.

"No, I shouldn't. It's my own money, after all. Being my own, should take good care of it."

Old Thomas came in with some glasses, and the argument dropped. Tod began again as we were going upstairs together.

"You see, Johnny," he said, stepping inside my room on his way, and holding the door to, for fear of eavesdroppers, "there's that hundred pounds I owe Brandon. The old fellow has been very good, never so much as hinting that he remembers it, and I shall pay him back the first thing. To do this, I must have exclusive possession of the money. A fine bobbery the Pater would make if he got to know of it. Besides, a man, come to my age, likes to have a banking account—if he can. Good night, lad."

Tod carried his point. He turned so restive and obstinate over it as to surprise and vex the Squire, who of course knew nothing about the long-standing debt to Mr. Brandon. The Squire had no legal power to keep the money, if Tod insisted upon having it. And he did insist. The Squire put it down to boyish folly, self-assumption; and groaned and grumbled all the way to Worcester, when Tod was taking the five-hundred pound cheque, paid to him free of duty, to the Old Bank.

"We shall have youngsters in their teens wanting to open a banking account next!" said the Pater to Mr. Isaac, as Tod was writing his signature in the book. "The world's coming to something."

"I daresay young Mr. Todhetley will be prudent, and not squander it," observed Mr. Isaac, with one of his pleasant smiles.

"Oh, will he, though! You'll see. Look here," went on the Squire, tapping the banker on the arm, "couldn't you, if he draws too large a cheque at any time, refuse to cash it?"

"I fear we could not do that," laughed Mr. Isaac. "So long as he does not overdraw his account, we are bound to honour his cheques."

"And if you do overdraw it, Joe, I hope the bank will prosecute you!—I would, I know," was the Squire's last threat, as we left the bank and turned towards the Cross, Tod with a cheque-book in his breast pocket.

But Mr. Brandon could not be paid then. On going over to his house a day or two afterwards, we found him from home. The housekeeper thought he was on his way to one of the "water-cure establishments," in Yorkshire, she said, but he had not yet written to give his address.

"So it must wait," remarked Tod to me as we went home.

"By Jove!" cried Tod, taking a leap in the air.

About a week had elapsed since the journey to the Old Bank, and Tod was opening a letter that had come addressed to him by the morning post.

"Johnny! will you believe it, lad? Temple asks me to be of the boating lot, after all."

It was even so. The letter was from Slingsby Temple, written from Templemore. It stated that he had been disappointed by some of those who were to have made up the number, and if Todhetley and Ludlow would supply their places, he should be glad.

Tod turned wild. You might have thought, as Mrs. Todhetley remarked, that he had been invited to Eden.

"The idea of Temple's asking *you*, Johnny!" he said. "You are of no good in a boat."

"Perhaps I had better decline?"

"No, don't do that, Johnny. It might upset the party altogether," he answered slowly. "You must do your best."

"I have no boating suit."

"I will treat you to one," said Tod munificently. "We'll get it at Evesham. Pity but my things would fit you."

So it was, for he had loads of them.

The Squire, for a wonder, did not oppose the scheme. Mrs. Todhetley (like Lady Whitney) did, in her mild way. As Bill said, all mothers were alike—always foreseeing danger. And though she was not Tod's true mother, or mine, either, she was just as anxious for us, and looked upon it as nearly certain that one of us would come home drowned, and the other with the ague.

"They won't sleep on the bare ground of course," said Duffham; who chanced to call that morning, while Tod was writing his letter of acceptance to Slingsby Temple.

"Of course we shall," fired Tod, resenting the remark. "What harm could it do us?"

"Give some of you rheumatic fever," said Duffham.

"Then why doesn't it give it to the gipsies?" retorted Tod.

"The gipsies are used to it. You young men must have a waterproof sheet to lie upon, or a tarpaulin, or something of the sort."

Tod tossed his head, disdaining an answer, and wrote on.

"You will have rugs and great-coats with you, of course," went on Duffham. "And I'll give you a packet of quinine powders. It is as well to be prepared for contingencies. If you find any symptoms of unusual cold, or shivering, just take one or two of them."

"Look here, Mr. Duffham," said Tod, dashing his pen on the table. "Don't you think that you had better attend us yourself with a medicine chest? Put up a cargo of rhubarb—and magnesia—and family pills. A few quarts of senna tea might not come in amiss. My patience! Are we girls?"

"And I should recommend you to carry a small keg of whiskey amid the boat stores," continued Duffham, not in the least put out. "You'll want it. Take a nip of it neat when you first get up from the ground in the morning. It is necessary you should, and will ward off some evils that might otherwise arise. Johnny Ludlow, I'll put the quinine into your charge: mind you don't forget it."

"Of all old women!" muttered Tod. "Had the Pater been in the room, all this might have set him against our going."

On the following day we went over to Whitney Hall, intending to take Evesham on our way back, and buy what was wanted. Surprise the first. Bill Whitney was not at home, and was not to be of the boating party.

"You never saw anybody in such a way in your life," cried Helen; who could devote some time to us, now Temple was gone. "I must say, it was too bad of papa. He never made any objection while Mr. Temple was here, but let poor William anticipate all the pleasure; and then he went and turned round afterwards."

"Did he get afraid for him?" cried Tod, in wonder. "I'd not have thought it of Sir John."

"Afraid! no," returned Helen, opening her eyes. "What he got was a fit of the gout. A relapse."

"What has the gout to do with Bill?"

"Why, old Featherstone ordered papa to Buxton, and papa said he could not do without William to see to him there: mamma was laid up in bed with one of her bad colds—and she is not out of it yet. So papa went off, taking William—and you should just see how savage he was."

For William Whitney to be "savage" was something new. He had about the easiest temper in the world. I laughed and said so.

"Savage for him, I mean," corrected Helen, who was given to random speech. "Nothing puts him out. But it is a shame."

"I don't suppose Bill cares much: he is no hand at boating," remarked Tod. "Did he write to Temple and decline?"

"Of course he did," was Helen's resentfully-spoken answer: and she seemed, to say the least, quite as much put out as Bill could have been. "What else could he do?"

"Well, I am sorry for this," said Tod. "Temple has asked me now. Johnny also."

"Has he!" exclaimed Helen, her eyes sparkling. "I hope you will go."

"Of course we shall go," said Tod. "Where's Anna?"

"Anna? Oh, sitting up with mamma. She likes a sick-room: I don't."

"You'd like a boat better—if Temple were in it," remarked Tod with a saucy laugh.

"Just you be quiet," retorted Helen.

From Whitney Hall we went to Evesham, and hastily procured what we wanted. The next day but one was that fixed for our departure. And when it at last dawned, bright and hot, we started amidst the good wishes of all the house, Tod with a fishing rod and line, in case the expedition should afford an opportunity for fishing, and I with Duffham's quinine powders in my pocket.

Templemore, the seat of the Temples, was very nearly on the borders of Wales. We were not going there, but to a place called Sanbury, which lay within a few miles of the mansion. Slingsby Temple and his brother Rupert were already there, with the boat and the tent, and all the rest of the apparatus, making ready for our start on the morrow. Our head-quarters, until then, was at the Ship, a good old-fashioned inn, and we found that we were expected to be Temple's guests.

"I would have asked you to Templemore to dine and sleep," he observed in a cordial tone, "and my mother said she should have been pleased to see you; but to get down here in the morning would have been inconvenient. At least, it would take up the time that ought to be devoted to getting away. Will you come and see the boat?"

It was lying in a locked-up shed near the river. A tub-pair, large of its kind. Three of them were enough for it: and I saw that, in point of fact, I was not wanted for the working; but Temple either did not like to ask Tod without me, or else would not leave me out. The Temples might have more than their share of pride, but it was accompanied by an equal share of refined and considerate feeling.

"We shall make you useful, never fear," said he to me with a smile. "And it will be capital boating experience for you."

"I am sure I shall like it," I answered. And I liked *him* better than I ever had in my life.

Numerous articles were lying ready with the boat. Temple seemed to have thought of every needful thing. A pot to boil water in, a pan for frying, a saucepan for potatoes, a mop and towing rope, stone jugs for beer, milk, and fresh water, tins to hold our grog, and the like. Amid the stores were tea, sugar, candles, cheese, butter, a cooked ham, some tinned provisions, a big jar of beer, and (Duffham should have seen it) a two-gallon keg of whiskey.

"A doctor up with us said we ought to have whiskey," remarked Tod. "He is nothing but an old woman. He put some quinine powders in Johnny's pocket, and talked of a waterproof sheet to lie upon."

"Quite right," said Temple. "There it lies."

And there it did lie, wrapped round the folded tent. A large waterproof tarpaulin to cover the ground, at night, and keep the damp from our limbs.

"Did you ever make a boating tour before, Temple?" asked Tod.

"Oh yes. I like it. I don't know any pleasure equal to that of encamping out at night on a huge plain, where you may study all the stars in the heavens."

As Temple spoke, he glanced towards a small parcel in a corner. I guessed it was one of his night telescopes.

"Yes, it is," he assented, "but only a small one. The boat won't stretch, and we can only load it according to its limits."

Rupert Temple came up as we were leaving the shed. I had never seen him before. He was the only brother left, and Slingsby's presumptive heir. Why, I know not, but I had pictured Rupert as being like poor Fred—tall, fair, blooming as a man can be. But there existed not a grain of resemblance. Rupert was just a second edition of Slingsby: little, dark, plain, and proud. It was not an offensive pride, quite the contrary: and with those they knew well they were cordial and free.

Those originally invited by Temple were his cousin Arthur Slingsby, Lord Cracroft's son; Whitney; and a young Welchman named Pryce-Hughes. All had accepted, and intended to keep the engagement, knowing then of nothing to prevent it. But, curious to say, each one in succession subsequently wrote to decline it. Whitney had to go elsewhere with his father; Pryce-Hughes hurt his arm, which disabled him from rowing; and Arthur Slingsby went off without ceremony in somebody's yacht to Malta. As the last of the letters came, which was Whitney's, Mrs. Temple seemed struck with the coincidence of all refusing, or compelled to refuse. "Slingsby, my dear," she said to her son, "it looks just as though you were not to go." "But I will go," answered Temple, who did not like to be baulked in a project, more than anybody

else likes it: "if these can't come, I'll get others who can." And he forthwith told his brother Rupert that there'd be room for him in the boat—he had refused him before; and wrote to Tod. After that, came another letter from Pryce-Hughes, saying his arm was better, and he could join the party at Bridgenorth or Bewdley. But it was too late: the boat was filled. Temple meant to do the Severn, the Wye, and the Avon, with a forced interlude of canals, and to be out a month, taking it easily, and resting on Sundays.

"Catch Slingsby missing Sunday service if he can help it!" said Rupert, aside to me.

We started in our flannel suits and red caps, and started well, but not until the afternoon; Temple steering, his brother and Tod taking the oars. The water was very shallow; and by-and-by we ran aground. The stern of the boat swung round, and away went our tarpaulin, and was carried off by the current before we could save it.

Well, that first afternoon there were difficulties to contend with, and one or other of the three was often in the water; but we made altogether some five or six miles. It was the hottest day I ever felt; and about seven o'clock, on coming to a convenient meadow nearly level with the river, none of us were sorry to step ashore. Making fast the boat for the night, we landed the tent and other things, and looked about us. A coppice bounded the field on the left; right across, in a second field, stood a substantial farm-house, surrounded by its barns and ricks. Temple produced one of his cards, which was to be taken to the house, and the farmer's leave asked to encamp on the meadow. Rupert Temple and Tod made themselves decent to go on the errand.

"We shall want a bundle or two of straw," said Temple; "it won't do to lie on the bare ground. And some milk. You must ask if they will accommodate us, and pay what they charge."

They went off, carrying also the jar to beg for fresh water. Temple and I began to unfurl the tent, and to busy ourselves amid the things generally.

"Halloa! What's to do here?"

We turned, and saw a stout, comely man, in white shirt-sleeves, an open waistcoat, knee-breeches, and top-boots; no doubt the farmer himself. Temple explained. He and some friends were on a boating tour, and had landed there to encamp for the night.

"But who gave you leave to do it?" asked the farmer. "You are trespassing. This is my ground."

"I supposed it might be necessary to ask leave," said Temple, haughtily courteous; "and I have sent to yonder house—which I presume is yours—to solicit it. If you will kindly accord the permission, I shall feel obliged."

That Temple looked disreputable enough, there could be no denying

No shoes on, no stockings, trousers tucked up above the knee: for he had been several times in the water, and, as yet, had done nothing to himself. But two of our college caps chanced to be lying exposed on the boat: and perhaps Temple's tone and address had made their due impression. The farmer looked hard at him, as if trying to remember his face.

"It's not one of the Mr. Temples, is it?" said he. "Of Templemore."

"I am Mr. Temple, of Templemore. I have sent my card to your house."

"Dash me!" cried the farmer, heartily. "Shake hands, sir. I fancied I knew the face. I've seen you out shooting, sir—and at Sanbury. I knew your father. I'm sure you are mainly welcome to camp alongside here, and to any other accommodation I can give you. Will you shake hands, young gentleman?" giving his hand to me as he released Temple's.

"My brother and another of our party are gone to your house to beg some fresh water, and buy some milk," said Temple; who did not seem at all to resent the farmer's familiarity, but rather to like it. "And we shall be glad of a truss or two of fresh straw if you can either sell it to us, or give it. We have had the misfortune to lose our waterproof sheet."

"Sell be hanged!" cried the farmer, with a jovial laugh. "Sell ye a truss or two o' straw! Sell ye milk! Not if I know it, Mr. Temple. Ye be welcome, sir, to as much as ever ye want of both. One of my men shall bring the straw down."

"You are very good."

"And anything else you please to think of. Don't scruple to ask, sir. Will you all come and sup at my house? We've got a rare round o' beef in cut, and I saw the missis making pigeon-pies this morning."

But Temple declined the invitation most decisively; and the farmer, perhaps noting that, did not press it. "It was rare weather for the water," he observed.

"We could do with less heat," replied Temple.

"Ay," said the farmer, "I never felt it worse. But it's good for the corn."

And with that he left us. The other two came back with water and oceans of milk. Sticks were soon gathered from the coppice, the fire made, the round pot, filled with water, was put on to boil for tea, and the tent was set up.

Often and often in my later life have I looked back to that evening. The meal over—and a jolly good one we made—we sat round the camp fire, then smouldering down to red embers, and watched the setting sun, Rupert Temple and Tod smoking. It was a glorious sunset, the west lighted up with gold and purple and crimson; the sky above us clear and dark blue.

But oh, how hot it was! The moon came up as the sun went down, and the one, to our fancy, seemed to give out as much heat as the other. There we sat on, sipping our grog, and talking in the bright moonlight, Temple with his elbow on the grass, his face turned up towards the sky and the few stars that came out. The colours in the west gave place to a beautiful opal, stretching northwards.

"I should like to see the strange stars, opposite to us!" said Temple presently. "What a glorious sight it must be! Sometimes I feel inclined to take a voyage on purpose."

It was singular—I shall always think so—that the conversation should turn on MacRae, the Scotchman who used to make our skin creep at Oxford with his tales of second sight. We were *not* talking of Oxford, and I don't know how MacRae came up. Unless it was that from astronomy we got to astrology, and thence to witchcraft. Up he came, however, he and his weird believings; and Rupert Temple, who had not enjoyed the honour of Mac's acquaintance, and had probably never heard his name before, got me to relate one or two of Mac's choice experiences.

"Was the man a fool?" asked Rupert.

"Not a bit of it."

"I'm sure I should say so. Making out that he could foresee people's funerals before they were dead, or likely to die!"

"Poor Fred was three parts of a believer in them," put in Temple, in a dreamy voice, as though his thoughts were buried in that past time.

"Fred was!" exclaimed Rupert, taking his brother sharply up. "Believer in what?"

"MacRae's superstitions."

"Nonsense, Slingsby."

Temple made no rejoinder. In his eye, which chanced to catch mine at the moment, there was a singular expression. I wondered whether he was recalling that other superstition of Fred's: that little episode a night or two before he died.

"We had better be turning in," said Temple, getting up. "It won't do to sit here too long; we must be up betimes in the morning."

So we got to bed at last: if you can call it bed. The farmer's good straw was strewed thickly underneath us; we had our rugs; and the tent was fastened back at the entrance to admit air. But there was no air to admit, not a whiff of it; nothing came in but the moonlight. None of us remembered a lighter night, or a hotter one. I and Tod lay in the middle, the Temples on either side.

"I wonder who's got our sheet?" began Tod; breaking a silence that ensued when we had wished each other good night.

Nobody answered.

"I say," struck in Rupert, by-and-by, "I've heard one ought not to go

to sleep in the moonlight: it turns people luny. Do any of your faces catch it, outside there?"

"Go to sleep and don't talk," said Temple.

It might have been through the novelty of the situation; but the night was well on before any of us slept. Tod and Rupert Temple went off first, and next (I thought) Temple did. *I* did not.

I daresay you've never slept four in a bed. And, that, one of littered straw. It's all very well to lie awake when you've a good wide mattress to yourself, and can toss and turn at will; but in the close quarters of a tent you can't do it for fear of disturbing the others. However, the longest watch has its ending; and I was just dropping off, when Temple, next to whom I lay, started hurriedly and aroused me.

"What's that?" he cried, in a half whisper.

I lifted my head, startled. He was sitting up, his eyes fixed on the opening we had left in the tent.

"Who's there?—who is it?" he said again: and his low voice had a slow, queer sound, as though he spoke in fear.

"What is it, Temple?" I asked.

"There, standing just outside the tent, right in the moonlight," whispered he. "Don't you see?"

I could see nothing. The stir awoke Rupert. He called out to know what ailed us; and that aroused Tod.

"Some man looking in at us," explained Temple in the same queer tone, half of abstraction, half of fear, his gaze still strained on the aperture. "He is gone now."

Up jumped Tod, and dashed outside the tent. Rupert struck a match and lighted the lantern. Nobody was to be seen but ourselves; and the only odd thing to be remarked was the white hue Temple's face had taken. Tod was marching round the tent, looking about him far and near, and calling out to all intruders to show themselves. But nothing met his eye save the level plain we were encamped upon, lying pale and white under the moonlight, and the only sound he heard was the croaking of the frogs.

"What could have made you fancy it?" he asked of Temple.

"Don't think it was fancy," responded Temple. "Never saw any man plainer in my life. The tent had better be closed."

"You were dreaming, Slingsby," said Rupert, as he put down the canvas and blew out the lantern. "Let's get to sleep again."

Which we did. At least, I can answer for myself.

The first beams of the glorious sun awoke us, and we rose to the beginning of another day, and to the cold, shivery feeling that, in spite of the heat of the past night and of the coming day, attends the situation. I could understand now why the nip of whiskey, as Duffham called it, was necessary. Tod served it out. Lighting the fire of sticks to boil our tea-kettle—or the round pot that served for a kettle—

we began to get things in order to embark again, when breakfast should be over.

"I say, Slingsby," cried Rupert to his brother, who seemed very silent, "what on earth took you, that you should disturb us in the night for nothing?"

"It was not for nothing. Some one was there."

"It must have been a stray sheep."

"Nonsense, Rupert. Could one mistake a sheep for a man?"

"Some benighted ploughman, then, 'plodding his weary way.'"

"If you could bring forward any ploughman to testify that it was he beyond possibility of doubt, I'd give him a ten-pound note."

"Look here," said Tod, after staring a minute at this odd remark of Temple's, "you may put all idea of ploughmen and everybody else away. No one was there. If there had been, I must have seen him: it was not possible he could betake himself out of sight in a moment."

"Have it as you like," said Temple. "I am going to take a bath. I've got a headache."

Stripping, he plunged into the Severn, which was very wide just there, and swam towards the middle of it.

"It seems to have put Slingsby out," observed Rupert, alluding to the night alarm. "Do you notice how thoughtful he is?——Just look at that fire!"

The sticks had turned black, and now began to smoke and hiss, giving out never a bit of blaze. Down knelt Rupert on one side and I on the other.

"Damp old obstinate things!" he ejaculated. And we set on to blow at them with all our might.

"Where's Temple?" I exclaimed presently, looking off, and not seeing him. Rupert glanced over the river.

"He must be diving, Johnny. Slingsby's fond of diving. Keep on blowing, lad, or we shall get no tea to-day."

So we kept on. But, I don't know why, a sort of doubtful feeling came over me, and while I blew I watched the water, for Temple to come up. All in a moment he rose to the surface, gave one low, painful cry of distress, and disappeared again.

"Good heavens!" cried Rupert, leaping up and overturning the kettle into the fire.

But Tod was the quickest; and jumped in to the rescue. A first-rate swimmer and diver was he, almost as much at home in the water as out of it. In no time, as it seemed, he was striking back, bearing Temple. It was fortunate, for a crisis like that, that Temple was so small and slight—of no weight to speak of.

By dint of gently rubbing and rolling, we got some life into him and some whiskey down his throat. But he remained in the queerest, faintest state possible; no exertion in him, no movement hardly, no strength;

alive, and that was about all; and just able to tell us that he had turned faint in the water.

"What is to be done?" cried Rupert. "We must get a doctor to him: and he ought not to lie on the grass here. I wonder if that farmer would let him be taken to his house for an hour or two?"

I got into my boots, and ran off to ask; and met the farmer at the stile of the second field. He was coming towards us, curious perhaps to see whether we had started. Telling him what had happened, he showed himself all alive with sympathy, called some of his men to carry Temple to the farm, and sent back to prepare his wife. Their name, we found, was Best: and most hospitable, good-hearted people they turned out to be.

Well, Temple was taken there and a doctor was called in. The doctor shook his head, looked grave, and asked to have another. Then, for the first time, doubts stole over us that it might be more serious than we had thought for. A dreadful feeling of fear took possession of me, and in spite of all I could do, that scene at Oxford, when poor Fred Temple had been carried into old Mrs. Golding's to die, would not go out of my mind.

We got into our reserve clothes, as if conscious that the boating flannels were done with for the present, left one of the farmer's men to watch our boat and its contents, and stayed with Temple. He continued very faint, and lay nearly quite still. The doctors tried some remedies, but they did no good. One of them called it "syncope of the heart"; but the other said, hastily, "No, no; that was not the right term." They said Mrs. Temple had better be sent for.

"I was just thinking so," assented Rupert. "My mother ought to be with him. Who will go for her?"

"Johnny can," said Tod. "He is of no good here."

For that matter, none of us were of any good, for we could do nothing for Temple.

I did not relish the task: I did not care to tell a mother that her son, whom she believes to be well and hearty, is lying in danger. But I had to go: Rupert seemed to take it as a matter of course.

"Don't alarm her more than you can help, Ludlow," he said. "Say that Slingsby turned faint in the water this morning, and the medical men seem a little anxious. But ask her not to lose time."

Mr. Best started me on his own horse—a fine hunter, iron grey. The weather was broiling. Templemore lay right across country, about six miles off by road. It was a beautiful place; I could see that much, though I had but little time to look at it; and it stood upon an eminence, the last mile of the road winding gradually up to its gates.

Mrs. Temple was at one of the windows, and saw me ride hastily in. Seized with a prevision that something was amiss, she came out before I was well off the horse.

"It is Mr. Ludlow, I think," she said, her plain dark face (so much like Slingsby's) very pale. "What ill news have you brought?"

I told her in the best manner I was able, just in the words Rupert had suggested, speaking quietly, and not showing any alarm.

"Is there danger?" she at once asked.

"I am not *sure* that there is," I said, hardly knowing how to frame my answer. "The doctors thought you had better come, in case—in case of any danger arising; and Rupert sent me to ask you to do so."

She rang the bell, and ordered her carriage to be round instantly. "The bay horses," she added: "they are the fleetest. What will you take, Mr. Ludlow?"

I would not take anything. But a venerable old gentleman in black, with a powdered bald head—the butler, I concluded—suggested some lemonade, after my hot ride: and that I was glad of.

I rode on before, piloting the way to the farm. Slingsby lay in the same state, neither better nor worse: perhaps the breathing was somewhat more difficult. He smiled when he saw his mother, and put out his hand.

The day dragged itself slowly on. We did not know what to do with ourselves. Temple was to be kept quiet, and we might not intrude into his room—one on the ground-floor that faced the east. Mr. and Mrs. Best entertained us well, as far as meals went; but one can't be eating for ever. Now down in the meadow by the boat—which seemed to have assumed a most forlorn aspect—and now waiting for the last report of Temple.

"Is it here that Mr. Temple is lying?"

I was standing under the jessamine-covered porch, in the rays of the setting sun, when a stranger came up and put the question. An extraordinarily tall and thin clergyman, with grey hair.

It was Mr. Webster, perpetual curate of the parish around Templemore. And knew him before I heard his name, for he was the image of his son, Long Webster, who used to be at Oxford.

"I was unable to get here before," he said. "Is he any better?"

"I am afraid not," I answered. "We don't know what to make of it; it all seems so sudden and strange."

"But what is it?" he asked in a whisper.

"I don't know, sir. The doctors say something about the heart."

One of the doctors appeared just then; and they talked together in a low tone in the shaded porch. Not a ray of hope sat on the medical man's face: he intimated that Temple was dying.

"Dear me!" cried the dismayed Mr. Webster.

"He seems to know it himself," continued the doctor. "Though we have been most cautious not to alarm him by any hint of the kind."

Mr. Webster went in, and was shut up for some time alone with

Temple. Yes, he said, when he came out again, Temple knew all about it, and was perfectly resigned and prepared.

There was no bed for any of us that night. Temple's breathing grew worse; and at last we went in by turns, to prop up his pillows behind. Towards morning I was called in to replace Rupert.

"Who is this now?" panted Slingsby, as I took my place.

"It is I. Johnny Ludlow. Do you feel any better?"

"I think he is a little easier," Mrs. Temple put in.

"No, no," he said, just opening his eyes. "Do not grieve, mother. I shall be better off. I shall be with my father and Fred."

"Oh, my son, my son, don't lose heart!" she cried with a sob. "That will never do."

"I saw my father last night," said Temple.

The words seemed to strike her with a sort of shock. "No!" she exclaimed, perhaps thinking of the Temple superstition, and drawing back a step. "Pray, pray don't fancy that!"

"The tent was open to give us air," he said, speaking with difficulty. "I suddenly saw some one standing in the moonlight. I was next it; and I had not been able to get to sleep. For a moment I thought it was some intruder, passing by; but he took a strange likeness to my father, and I thought he beckoned——"

"We are not alone, Slingsby," interrupted Mrs. Temple, remembering me, her voice very cold.

"Ludlow knows. He knew the last time. Fred said he saw him, and I—I ridiculed it. Ludlow heard me. He came for Fred, mother; he must have come for me."

"Oh, I can't—I can't believe this, Slingsby," she cried in excitement. "It was fancy; nothing else. My darling, I cannot lose you! You have ever been dearer to me than my other children."

"Only for a little while, mother. It is God's will. That is our true home, you know; and then there will be no more parting. I am quite happy. I seem to be half there now.—What's that light?"

Mrs. Temple looked round, and saw a faint streak coming in over the tops of the shutters. "It must be the glimmering of dawn in the east," she said. "The day is breaking."

"Ay," he answered: "my day. I shall soon come for you. Where's Rupert? I should like to say good-bye to him. Yes, mother, that's the dawn of Heaven."

And, just as the sun rose, he went there.

That was the end of our boating tour. Ridicule has been cast on the facts, and will be again. It is a painful subject; and I don't know that I should have related it, but for its having led to another (and more lively) adventure, which will be told next month.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

TEN DAYS AT SEA.

By the Author of "A Night in a Monastery."

THURSDAY, the 19th July, 1875. After a terrific hurry, bustle, and struggle, we catch the half-past one train at Fenchurch Street. At the instant of starting, J. puts his head in at the door. His body naturally follows. Well met, indeed. Amongst sundry other purchases he displays a stock of drawing materials. To which materials —passing over in silence the genius of the artist—the reader is indebted for the lively sketches that accompany the prosaic annals of "short and simple" diary.

A quick run down to Millwall Junction. Here the train is exchanged for a tram, and we speedily reach the South Dock. "By Jove!" cries J. "How fortunate! There she goes! In the lock! Just in time!"

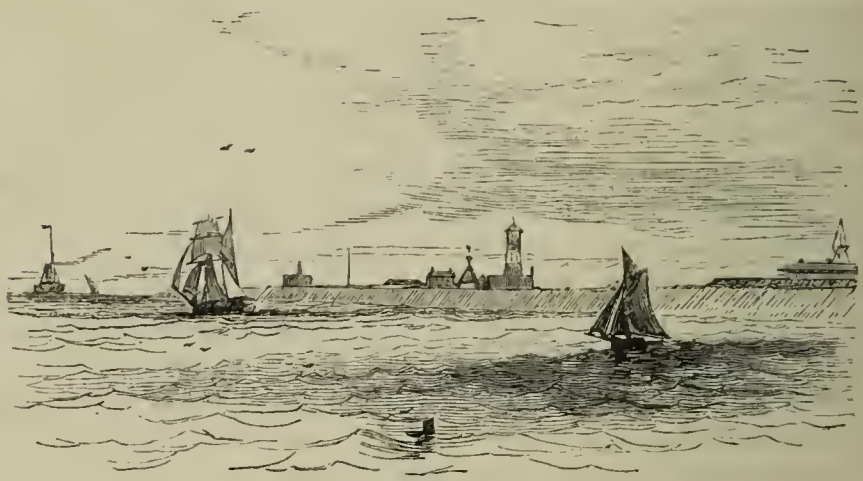
The feminine pronoun personal refers: not to some charming member of the fairer but weaker sex, as so much spasmodic enthusiasm would reasonably lead one to suppose: but to the good ship *Carnarvon Castle*, one of the most beautiful vessels that ever sailed from London.

We are just in time to climb on board as she passes through the lock. Now we are fairly out in free water, being towed down to Gravesend. Various insane hats and frantic handkerchiefs as usual are being waved from the fast-receding shore. Once more we begin to feel ourselves outward bound.

The river presents its normal aspect of life and activity. Diminutive craft are passing to and fro; small steamers bearing passengers to Greenwich and various places; barges loaded with hay and other merchandize; vessels bound homeward or outward. From the shore issue sounds of hammering and forging; the ring of iron, the clanking of chains. We have but to close our eyes to fancy ourselves escaping from some infernal region. We *do* close them for a moment, and at once are transported to the scene of a sad story; alas! only an every-day story; the old, old story. We have a vision of Mephistopheles, and Faust, and Marguerite. We are comfortably putting a new ending to the tale: Mephistopheles, defeated, disappears to his proper sphere, down the trap-door. Faust marries Marguerite, and they live happily ever after: when—"What, napping already!" cries a speaking-trumpet in our ear, with a noise certainly suited to the regions of Mephistopheles: and J., grinning like one of Victor Hugo's imps, brings us rudely back to present life and scenes.

Pilot No. 1.

The tug is gradually pulling us towards Gravesend. There is something ludicrous in this huge body of masts and sails and timber being set in motion by that little cockleshell of a steamboat. But the mouse was of service to the lion; and the ship certainly could not get on jus now by the aid of her own resources. She has left Greenwich behind her, and presently comes to a picturesque grey house, said to be built of the stones of old London Bridge: a house we have never yet passed without being told by some one on board, pilot or seaman: "That, sir, is the house where Eliza Cook once lived." Amongst these rough tars, whatever other writer may be unknown, it seems that you will find recorded, with an affectionate thought, the name of Eliza Cook. Who then can say that the English are not a poetry-loving people?



Dungeness Point.

The ship is now at Gravesend. Here the tug halts for half an hour to take on twenty tons of coal. This done, she steams off again. The river gradually widens; the shores become flat and barren; we are approaching the sea. At eight bells the sky is overcast; a thick, drizzling rain, bringing speedy darkness, begins to fall. A disheartening commencement to our run down Channel.

We have two pilots on board: the river pilot, who leaves the ship at Deal: and the Channel pilot, whose business it is to see the ship safe into the Bristol waters. At four o'clock in the morning the former goes off in the tug, and the ship is now left to her own sailing powers. But at that early hour we are happily oblivious of all sublunary matters, sleeping the sleep of a quiet conscience: to awake some four hours later to realities.

And such realities! It is Friday morning, and the glorious sun has swept the clouds from the face of the sky, and pours his golden beams upon all around. There lies the land. We passed Margate and Ramsgate in the early morning, and now, at ten a.m. are opposite Dungeness: a long reach of low sand-beach, the lighthouse at one end of it. In the distance stretch the white cliffs of Folkestone. We are making way too

quickly. The pilot is in ecstasies. He prophesies that at this rate we shall reach Cardiff—our destination—in two days.

The day wears on. Most days do wear on. Eight bells are struck, and with them rings out that other very important peal, the dinner bell. We respond with goodwill to the announcement. Captain, officers, and guests assemble. The steward uncovers the soup, and hands round the plates. J. deals out every ladleful with a word of praise. "Never taste such soup on land as we get at sea. Better than all your green turtle, ox-tail, or mulligatawny. Nothing on land, I repeat, approaches our soup at sea. I am sure you will all agree with me."

Steward in a Gale of Wind.

Hopes and appetites thus quickened, all simultaneously take two or three spoonfuls in quick succession. Simultaneously we put down our spoons, gaze speechlessly at each other, finally groan, cough, choke. Are we dead men or are we not? Is this decoction rank, or merely a mild poison?

"How now!" cries J. "What's all this?" In silence we allow him to take a spoonful from the plate before him. One dose is enough. "Steward! Steward! what's the meaning of this? Run and ask the cook with what ingredients he has made the soup."

Cook's Perplexity.

The steward is a man about four-feet-six in height. He makes up in circumference, however, what is lacking in stature. Short-winded, he puffs and blows upon the least exertion. His strong point is his amazing neatness of person and cleanliness of work. It is the greatest fun in the world to see him struggling across the main deck in a gale of wind. He disappears, now, like lightning; returns like thunder. "If

you please, sir, the cook's very sorry, sir, but he accidentally made the soup with sea-water!"

Later on, J. beards the lion in his den, and sketches the cook's perplexed visage on the occasion, which faithful sketch is reproduced in facsimile for the benefit of the reader.

This episode being horrible and sensational enough for one day, we pass over the remaining hours. It will sufficiently satisfy the reader's curiosity to state that the sun set as usual, and darkness came over the sea.

Saturday morning. At six bells—11.a.m.—we find ourselves becalmed twelve miles off Beachy Head. The pilot's prophecy of a two days' run has become an absurd bit of sarcasm from its utter delusion. The distance is hazy. Sea and sky are a pale bluey white melting into each other. The cliffs called the Seven Sisters are visible, dipping out of the water. The ships around are motionless as if riding at anchor.

Few can realize, save by experience, the utter stillness of a calm at sea. Perfect stillness of air and water. And when the men have turned in, perfect stillness on board. To a landsman it is an utterly new life, a new sensation; than which nothing can be more deliciously full of repose. Just fancy yourself for a moment beneath a broad canopy of blue sky, unbroken by a single cloud: surrounded by blue and green waters far as the eye can reach: nothing but water. The sun pouring down his hot rays upon all; giving you such an idea of sunshine and brilliant atmosphere as you will never gain on land. Lounging on deck in an easy chair, or stretched on an extemporized couch, Time seems to have suspended his flight: life to have arrested every sensation but that of revelling in the dolce far niente of the moment.

The man at the wheel stands utterly idle; the captain now sits down resignedly to a book; now takes up a thread of the conversation; now paces the deck, and looks upwards and outwards for the first sign of a breeze. All is complete stillness—stillness—stillness: utter suspension. Oh, the wondrous rest of this calm to overstrained nerves!

The water plays around the vessel, and lazily washes her sides with a soothing sound. Now a shoal of small fish swim past, and now a shot startles the air as J. aims at a seagull and brings the poor martyr down on the wing. The sails of the ships that are in shadow look jet black against the sky, and throw long dark reflections upon the pale water. Not a thread moves. You glance upwards, and the white glare brings tears to your eyes, which quickly return earthwards. The eye sweeps the whole circumference of the horizon, and finds no resting-place save that one small spot, where the snow-white cliffs of Beachy Head and the Seven Sisters dip out of the water.

Eight bells. An order goes through the ship. "Square the cro'jack yard. Port your helm!"

For a few moments there is bustle on board. The tramp of men

running; the creak of a yard squaring. Then all again is calm and quiet.

About two o'clock cats' paws begin to show themselves upon the water to the N.W. The ship is made ready to answer to the breeze that should follow them. But the breeze comes not. The white paws disappear, and the sea becomes as a sea of glass. We drift further from the land, but do not lose it. The decks are clear. The men have turned in. Not a sound is heard save the monotonous tramp of the pilot as he paces the deck, and longs disconsolately for a change of weather. A small boat puts off from a trawler, and comes alongside with fish. For a couple of shillings we purchase a dozen of the largest whiting ever seen; whiting larger than the finest mackerel. This is the proper time to cook and eat them, when the sea water is not yet dry upon their skins. They thus form a plat for a veritable gourmet.

Day draws on to night. Still the calm continues, though the slightest suspicions of a breeze sends the ship through the sea at the rate of knots. Twilight gradually falls upon the water, and changes one's mood from the exhilaration of morning and sunshine to the melancholy of evening. The men at the break of the fo'castle strike up a concert amongst themselves, the instrumental part consisting of bones and a concertina. One or two of them attempt a jig or a Scotch reel, according to their national proclivities. The great length of the ship renders the music sufficiently distant not to disturb those on the poop. The ships one by one disappear, as darkness blots them out. Where vessels have been we now see lights glimmering in the mysterious night.

Sunday morning. A breeze has sprung up, and during the dark hours we have made good way. About six o'clock—four bells—we pass the Isle of Wight. Moving steadily we come to St. Alban's Head, its few white houses looking like patches of snow upon the grey rocky cliffs. That long stretch of land in the distance is Portland, where the unhappy criminals are working out each his individual term of punishment.

It is just a morning for Sunday. At nine o'clock—two bells—the wind drops. All is calm and peaceful. Such calm and peace as can only be felt and found at sea: as would not be found or felt in the quietest, most deserted village in the world: or the middle of the great Sahara.

There a feeling of desolation and solitariness takes possession of the soul: but in the wonderful silence and stillness of a dead calm at sea such a feeling is the very last to be entertained. This morning the water around us is green and clear as an emerald, and rolls about far as the eye can reach in small hillocks and ripples, which dance and reflect myriads of dazzling, sparkling jewels in the broad path of sun

shine. The water plashes lazily, and washes the sides of the ship with a soft, soothing, voluptuous sound. The white sails of a small craft in shore stand out against the darker cliffs. A flock of sea-gulls with their black backs and snow-white breasts rest upon the surface of the water, or take wing landwards with shrill, plaintive screams.

For a time we leave all this, and go down to service. Six bells ring; the men are summoned aft. Each takes his place in the cabin, whilst the captain reads the morning prayers. A rough set of tars, after their kind. But for this immediately present connecting link, which binds all mankind in one common circle, one would almost feel in the presence of a different order of creation. But their behaviour is quiet and reverent—whatever it may be in the fo'castle—and whether they feel the words or not, they are equally momentous to all assembled.

This morning the Psalm is especially applicable to the situation: to a first Sunday at sea. It is the 22nd morning of the month, and the Psalm tells us that "They who go down to the sea in ships and occupy their business in great waters, these men see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep." How it comes home to us this morning, that wonderful description of the raging of the storm and the distress of those in peril. How easily can we realize the calm which follows. "For He maketh the storm to cease, so that the waves thereof are still." Then comes in that wonderful verse at intervals like the oft-repeated chorus of some mighty anthem, which we can fancy swelling and resounding through the fretted arches of some grand old cathedral: "Oh that men would therefore praise the Lord for His goodness, and declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of men!"

About eight bells we go up on deck, and find that the ship is drifting backwards. Portland is fading behind the western horizon, and the Isle of Wight is looming up to le'ward; its white chalky cliffs clear cut against a pale background of sky.

But as the day wears on, we find ourselves once more alongside Portland. The sun is dipping in the west, casting a flood of gold upon the now somewhat restless waters. A strong breeze is blowing dead against us, so that during the whole afternoon it has been tack and tack with the good ship. Every now and then, after a spell of quiet sailing, has come the order from the pilot: "All hands 'bout ship!" The order is passed down the decks, the men turn out of their bunks, and to the previous quiet succeeds an interval of noise and activity. Men running, ropes creaking and slacking, sails giving way; everything apparent confusion, yet perfect order. Out of which issues the command: "Mains'l haul!" And the yards and the sails swing round with a mighty motion; cracking, creaking, flapping in the breeze; giving a wonderful idea of the power and strength of a ship; of the

still mightier power of the wind, which can treat the sails as if they were tinder, and break the masts as though they were but reeds. And the vessel's course is changed by this manœuvre. You look behind for the land, and it has vanished. There it lies, on the contrary, before you. The ship has turned round. The sun, a minute ago to your right hand, is now to your left. Everything has altered its position as if by magic; for the ship has swung round imperceptibly. Now the mysterious gloaming which never creeps over the earth without bringing a thrill of awe—a sense of the end of all things; that all things have their appointed times and seasons—is spreading over the surface of the deep, announcing the death of another day.

Monday morning. We have made little progress during the night, and now are perfectly becalmed. The hitherto green sea has now changed to a liquid blue; lights and shadows dance upon the waters, which shimmer and sparkle beneath the sunshine and the white fleecy clouds. Not a breath flaps the sails of the good ship, which hang like sheets upon the yards. Around us, in all directions, large fish are jumping and skipping out of the water, as if they, as much as ourselves, rejoiced and revelled in this delightful state of existence.

One of the men comes aft, and asks the captain for some medicine to cure him from the effects of having slept all night upon a wet pillow. He looks ill enough to puzzle our sapient *Æ*sculapius pro tem.—or any other. The captain puts on a wise aspect, appears to fall into deep thought: finally administers a blister to the back of each ear, a mustard-plaster upon the chest, and a strong dose of hot grog. We hear no more of sleeping on wet pillows.

This man is followed by a second: a big, strong-looking fellow, with scarcely his match in the ship. He begs a narcotic to send him to sleep. He has gone in for too much worship at the shrine of Bacchus during his stay on shore, and is very near indeed having a touch of that malady which so often follows when strong drink is raging within. Indeed it has not quite escaped him. A wild, restless, haggard look about the eyes proclaims his state. "He can't sleep. If he could only get to sleep he should be all right." But the moment he closes his eyes he sees far more than is agreeable to his imagination. The man gets his dose, and next day is fifty per cent. better.

To-day we have made some headway, and by six in the evening we are within twelve miles of the Start Point. The S.W. wind blows sharp and cool; the sky is clear and cloudless; the sea more gently agitated than of late.

Early this morning we throw out lines in the hope of catching fish for dinner; but the fish, though playing about in all directions, wisely refuse to be caught, be the hooks baited never so daintily. As evening advances we near the land, and steer straight for Dartmouth harbour, which lies upwards out of sight, between the hills.

Here is the fair and favoured county of Devonshire; but the luxuriant beauties of the soil lie for the most part out of sight. Before us much is barren. Dark patches shine out, covered with furze, whilst the outline seems generally bare of trees or other vegetation. As we look, the beacon at the Start is lighted, and flashes out its brilliant glare as a warning to mariners. A rose-glow illumines the western sky; a rose-glow plays and dances upon the waters. Evening seems as if flushed with wine.

A small coasting schooner at this moment crosses our bows with all her sails set. She is tacking, just as we are, and now is turning round upon us, as if she meant to give chase. We have made to-day, tack-and-tack, a matter of thirty-five miles. In the twilight the men at the break of the fo'castle have started their concertina and bones again. We are indulged with the clatter of their toes and heels jigging upon the deck. The night grows dark and darker. Soon nothing is heard on the wide, black waste of waters but the mournful plash, plash of the ripples washing the sides of the ship. Nothing is seen in this bewildering blackness but the flashing of that bright Start light throwing abroad its warning and its guide. Darkness, darkness covers all.

A Pas Seul.

Tuesday morning. This morning we, and the various vessels around us, look like "painted ships upon a painted ocean." (Why does this image so constantly occur to one's memory, at sea?) It must have been such a morning as this that first inspired Coleridge with his simile, so precisely does it describe our present position and appearance. Vessels are standing all round us with their sails set. They do not move an inch; stationary, as if charmed into inanition. Early this morning, says the pilot, it was clearer than he has seen it for many years. Portland, the Start, and the entrance to Plymouth harbour were all in sight—a rare occurrence. We have made no way during the night, but on the contrary have drifted backward ten miles.

In the far-off distance a long thin streak of smoke in the sky betrays that a steamer has passed that way. She, at any rate, is independent of winds and tides. Why has she not crossed our path and taken us in

tow? Is it because the same rule obtains at sea that is so popular on shore? Not the golden rule that Owen reduced to arithmetical form for the benefit of Frank Osbaldistone: "Let A do to B as he would have B do to him; the product will give the rule of conduc required:" but rather the rendering of Wordsworth in a very different sense:

> "For why? because the good old rule
> Sufficeth them; the simple plan,
> That they should take who have the power,
> And they should keep who can."

So there goes the steamer far out of sight, and here lie we, motionless.

Half-past nine: three bells. I will strike them. There they go; "vibrating on the broad expanse of ocean." And there comes the answer from the other end of the vessel. We might fancy it an echo from a phantom ship. So time creeps steadily on, day succeeding night. The men, having nothing to do, have struck up their music; but somehow this morning a little of it goes a long way. The shades of evening are needed to mellow the sound, as a thin gauze veil thrown over an unfinished piece of sculpture will subdue its roughness. In the full garish light the notes, though not near to us, seem harsh, and jar upon the nervous system. As for the pilot, *his* nervous system is so unstrung by this (to him, not to us) untoward state of affairs, that he has fairly turned in and gone to bed, in the hope of averting an attack of brain fever. He and we are at antagonistic interests. To us this calm is propitious and delightful, whilst he looks upon us as a veritable Jonah.

It is a singular coincidence that for two or three nights running, at nightfall, when there has been some breeze blowing, we have come up on the poop, and remarked to the pilot, who has been glorying and exulting in his "capful of wind": "Pilot, we are going to have a calm." And at almost the very moment down drops the wind, leaving not a breath to stir the sails. The pilot at length looks terror-stricken, and dreads our slightest remark about the weather.

One morning he consults seriously with the captain as to whether it would be a criminal act to throw us overboard like Jonah. Before a satisfactory decision is arrived at, the breakfast-bell rings, and our life is spared. Many a man's life has been saved by a far less important incident.

"At any rate, sir," concludes the pilot, "I beg to assure you that if this gentleman should go round with you to Cardiff next voyage, I for one shall decline to take charge of the good ship. My reputation, sir, is at stake."

The pilot is in downright earnest. He is evidently of a superstitious turn of mind.

Our supply of fresh meat is growing short; we are anxious to catch

some fish for dinner, by way of a change. The lines are over our stern. Shall we have any sport? There they go, floundering and jumping all round us; we hear their splash even at a great distance, but still they refuse to be charmed.

In the very nick of time, a boat comes alongside containing a man and a boy; the second that has paid us a visit: they have fish, of course, and want to make an exchange. They exhibit a fine lot of soles in their basket.

"What do you want for them?" asks J.

"Anything you can spare, sir," says the old, weather-beaten fisherman. "A little grog and tobacco; or anything else."

"No spirits to spare," answers J. "Making a long run down channel. All stores sealed up with the Government seal. They neglected to come on board at Gravesend."

This is true enough. At Gravesend, the custom-house officers neglected to put in an appearance, and give out sufficient stores for the voyage to Cardiff; and for all they had done we might have entered the port far more unhappy specimens of humanity than the crew of the "Flying Dutchman."

"Sorry for that, sir," returns the fisherman, looking affectionately at the contents of his basket. "Fine lot of fish, there. Take a little tobacco."

The bargain is soon struck. One of the boys lowers a bucket into the boat with the tobacco, the fish is hauled up. The fisherman goes off very well contented; and when dinner-time comes, more than one on board thinks there are worse exchanges in life than bartering "gold leaf" for a "kettle of fish."

Wednesday morning. The wind is still foul but stiff, and we drive quickly through the waters. But being still on the tack-and-tack principle we make no very great way. The sea bears now a promise of roughness. The rigging creaks ominously. The good ship rolls somewhat. This morning, possibly by way of satire, the cook sent in for the first time rolls for breakfast; they were certainly more enjoyable than the rolls of the vessel. As the ship cuts the water she leaves a long track of foam on either side, a long wake behind her. We passed Plymouth in the night. At ten o'clock we came up with the Eddystone lighthouse, which stands out, a noble beacon, in the midst of the waters. We are too far off to trace anything but a thin column rising out of the sea; the alternate bands of red and white are lost. Scarce a ship is in sight. The wind has scattered us apart during the night. Altogether we are experiencing a less luxurious time of it. The feeling of calm and stillness, of utter rest, is missing. The hot sunshine is absent. We cannot bask lazily in its smiles, reclining on an extemporized couch of crimson velvet cushions and downy pillows. Doubtless the strong breeze is invigorating; doubtless there

is something exhilarating in the feeling of rapid motion; of cutting quickly through the waters. Bound on a voyage, say to the Cape, this would be charming. But under present circumstances yesterday was more enjoyable than to-day. To-day, it is not so easy a matter, either, to pace the deck. The wind is laying the ship over very much to her right side, so that walking the deck is something very much like walking up and down hill. Every now and then, too, the ship gives a lurch, and your foot a corresponding plunge. You look down expecting to see a deep hole, but find nothing but smooth, firm deck. Mystery.

By eight bells we have made good way down the Cornish coast, and are opposite Dodman's Point.

THE CARNARVON CASTLE.

At one o'clock the sun breaks out, the clouds take flight. The chill is off the wind. The warm beams gild and brighten everything. The very roaring of the water is pleasant. The white horses look dazzling as they crest the waves. A French vessel, with all sails set, crosses our stern. She is spinning up channel with the very wind that is preventing us from spinning down. Her sails in the sunshine seem white as snow.

At five o'clock we have before us the most charming and beautiful

view witnessed since quitting the river. Before us lies Falmouth, sleeping in its bay. On that projecting headland stands Pendennis, its old castellated walls proudly challenging the ocean. The water runs up and down the land in the most picturesque of creeks. To the right the lighthouse, white as snow, nestles amidst refreshing verdure. The hills show the most charming outlines. Wooded vales, and laughing fields and green slopes lie before us, running down to the very edge of the sea. The sheaves are stacked, and hold forth a promise of rich harvest. The town of Falmouth, as much as is visible, looks bright and rural. We turn for a moment to those cruel rocks on the left—the Manacles; rocks that have been so destructive to shipping and human life. You might easily fancy them unknown sea monsters rising out of the water, seeking their prey. Much prey indeed can they boast. To them "the love of woman hath gone down," many a fair life of hope and promise has been cut short in the opening. Ere darkness sets in we catch sight of the Lizard Point, with its two lighthouses in the distance.

Thursday morning. The weather during the past night has been thick and dirty. It rains fast. The clouds seem almost level with the tops of our masts. We are now in Mount Bay, but the land is hidden. The ship is pitching furiously. Now we are taken down below the horizon, now carried up to the clouds. Impossible to rave this morning about the delicious colour of the water; the outlines of earth and sky; the sportive fish; the invigorating air. Stern reality in the shape of Atlantic rolling makes itself too palpably felt. By two o'clock the sky clears, and we are well in sight of the Land's End and the Longships lighthouse: in full view of the rocky coast. To our right lies St. Michael's Mount, its grey abbey-crowned height rising romantically out of the water. We are close enough to note the chief features of the rock scenery; scarcely close enough to discover all its peculiarities, or thoroughly enjoy them. From this distance the size of the rocks cannot be realized. Nevertheless the whole extent seen at one sweep; the white waves breaking at their base, and the blue sea rolling between us; its rugged undulations; here patches of grey stone rock rearing their perpendicular sides and looking like the ruins of some grand cathedral erected by Nature; there reaches of laughing fields suggestive of corn, and oil and wine: all these points comprised in one glance form a magnificent panorama.

Friday morning. What a contrast with yesterday! We have a blue, cloudless sky, unbroken sunshine. A swell upon the waters, it is true: that just here is inevitable; but smooth comparatively, for the wind has dropped. Again, we made no progress during the night: or, if any, it has been of a backward tendency. Down to the left stands the Wolf Lighthouse, a tall white column rising sharply out of the water: the most wonderful lighthouse, it is said, in the world: built in the

year 1870, at infinite trouble, of granite stone, 110 feet high, and showing a light seen at sixteen miles. A long track of white foam is visible on either side its foundations. On the left side of the structure, from our position, swings the fog-bell. As we look, two men issue forth upon the balcony, and gaze around. In the midst of the blue waters, dashed around with foam, cutting the clear background of the blue sky, the Wolf is a most picturesque object. In the distance may be seen the Scilly Islands, like so many rocks rising out of the ocean.

LAND'S END AND LONGSHIPS LIGHTHOUSE.

7 p.m. Just hauled up a dog-fish, a beautiful creature, its back a splendid dark blue, which comes off upon the hand if touched. It is useless in the way of food, and we throw it overboard again. The poor fish swims off with lightning speed, glad to be rid of our large hook. Daylight is fading fast, and we are making no progress; for we are close to the Wolf again, which now has mounted her red and white revolving light. On the other side is the white, fixed light of the Longships, showing itself against the dark background of the land.

Saturday morning. Wake up, and looking through the port-hole, do not recognize the land. Begin to have recollections of Robinson Crusoe and his sad fate. Communicate doubts to J. He, equally perplexed, goes up on deck. Comes down again with a face long drawn and fretted.

"By Jove! This is a go! Drifted thirty or forty miles during the night, and here we are abreast of Scilly." "How very silly!" we echo; upon which too palpable attempt, J. tries to look thunder, but gives it up in despair.

THE WOLF LIGHTHOUSE.

This announcement, though, is really no trifling matter. It means that we are further off from our destination than we were two days ago. We rally the pilot at the breakfast-table, but he is past all that. He has ceased to grumble. He is in despair, hopeless, resigned: ten years older in looks than when we passed Deal.

At ten o'clock the chief officer comes up on the poop to the captain. "Report two of the men missing, sir."

"Missing?" echoes J.

"Yes, sir. Can't be found anywhere."

This is strange. They can't have jumped into the sea and swum on shore. It is not probable that we have shipped mermen disguised as sailors. We have had no rough seas to wash them overboard. Therefore, says J., whose mind you will perceive, after such subtle reasoning, is eminently logical: "They must be skulking. Let the ship be searched for them."

The chief and second officers go forward, and then below: a strict search is instituted. After a time the chief officer comes back to the poop.

"Found the men, sir," he says, addressing J.

"Where were they?"

"Between the decks, sir. When asked what they went down for, they said to play cards."

"I'll teach them to play cards," replies J. "Bring them aft."

"To play cards," is merely an excuse. The men have got out of the way to escape washing the decks; a long task and a hard one, and one the men particularly dislike. They have gained their ends, for their absence is only observed when the decks are almost done. They

come aft before J., and are sharply interrogated. The men seem inclined to be insolent. One appears to think he has done a meritorious action in going below; the other, forsaking the cards, excuses himself by saying he had gone down after his pipe. The captain sends them forward with sundry unpleasant promises.

These men appear to be the black sheep of the ship. A few days ago we mentally noted the countenance of one of them as being of a particularly unpleasant and forbidding cast. He looks like a man who might stir up a sedition or head a mutiny. We will date forward a little, and at once end his career, as far as we are concerned.

During the voyage to Cardiff he is insolent to the officers. Says he is ill, and absolutely refuses to work. Does not work. Still refuses to work when we are in dock at Cardiff, declaring himself too ill. This is nothing but an excuse; the man is perfectly well: but he is sulky and idle. One day he goes off on shore with his bag, containing all his clothes. The man is running away, his friends having received a month's pay in advance from the office in London. He is stopped by a policeman and brought back, bag and baggage. Is marched into the cabin before the captain. Is again inclined to be insolent.

So it goes on until one day the captain gets a legal hold upon him. He is had up before a magistrate; and much to his astonishment is given four weeks' hard labour: sufficient time to bring the man to reflection and a better state of things if he will take the lesson to heart. But from the very look of the man, you may be sure he will come out only the more hardened. J. would stand in need of pity should he come within his clutches in a dark night's walk. Happily the sea rolls between them. Anyhow, the man is out of harm's way for a month to come. It is a relief to find the ship freed of his presence.

The other man—who wished to escape washing the decks—has run away long ago. More fortunate than this one, he managed to get clear with all his things. And twenty-four hours later was probably in London: ready to run round to Cardiff with some other ship, in the hope and with the full intention of serving it the like trick.

The way most of them go off is this. In the first place you cannot stop a man from going on shore. When darkness falls—or watching a favourable opportunity—they depart. They have no bag with them; but instead of one suit of clothes they have put on perhaps four or five, in fact, all they possess: and away they slope. They are seen no more, unless they are unlucky enough to be caught. In which case, they more often than not are treated to three months' imprisonment.

Sailors are, after all, a very rough set of men: a rough, hard, cruel set. If you are kind to them; a great proportion do not understand it. Many will respect you more for an oath than for a kind word. At least they will fear and obey you more. Take for instance this present crew. On the whole they are a fair specimen of a ship's crew: better

than many. They are kindly treated. Every indulgence the captain can grant them they receive. They come down to service on Sunday, and listen to the words spoken, and apparently understand them. Yet the day we catch the dog-fish : a harmless, beautiful creature : they have it down upon the main deck, and kick it and ill-use it, and enjoy its writhing in the most brutal manner. It is a revolting sight. It stirs up every fibre of sympathy against them. All kindly fellow feeling is, for the moment at any rate, extinguished. You feel that men who can so use the dumb creation, must themselves be insensible to kindness : that any but the most severe treatment is a mistake.

True, some allowance must be made for them : they have been taught no better, poor wretches. Frequently they do not meet with any better example from their officers. A great part of the commanders in the merchant service are as far removed from gentlemen as the social confines will permit. In feelings, manners, actions, they are antipodes of gentleness. Setting aside the question of severity, they look upon their men as dogs, and as such literally they treat them. Many indeed have a strong affinity with animals. We have heard of one, the commander of a splendid vessel, who, with no taste for the pleasures of solitude, *kept his pig in his own bath*, though that bath was removed but a foot from his head when he lay down in his hammock. If any fair reader starts with incredulity at the fact, we can only assure her of its reality.

To go back to our voyage, now drawing to a close.

Towards four o'clock the breeze at length springs up, and we begin to move. In an hour's time we are cutting through the water. A tug comes up with us, and from that moment does not lose sight of us, for the sole pleasure and profit of towing us into Cardiff. This breeze is the first favourable wind we have had since quitting the river. It is no longer tack and tack with us, but a straight ahead course towards our destination.

It is a glorious night, fair and balmy. With all her sails set, and filled with wind, cutting silently and rapidly through the waters ; no sound on board ; no sound around us in air or sea ; there is something weird and mysterious about the good ship. The darkness seems to increase her size. Her masts look a towering height : her sails gigantic. It seems almost appalling that we should be carrying so immense a weight above us. Like some mysterious colossal bird with outspread wings looks the ship under the dark canopy of night. The bright stars cast their glimmer upon the water, which is reflected around in myriads of phosphorescent sparks. At one o'clock we pass the splendid light of Lundy Island, in silence and darkness.

Sunday morning. Coming up on deck we find ourselves lying off Ilfracombe, for the moment becalmed. The breeze has fallen, the tide is against us.

Sitting in the stern of the ship, we looked downwards on the wide-spreading, dark blue ocean.

A whole fleet of vessels are passing down channel, with their sails set. To our right hand lies the Welsh coast; to our left Devonshire. In the early morning the large hills on either side are a picture of calm beauty. Almost they seem a type of that peace which is described as passing all understanding. In a nest lies Ilfracombe. Here we see rocks presenting a bold surface to the sea; there we trace green pastures with their hedgerows sloping down to the water. Down the whole line of land stretches an unbroken mass of white clouds, looking precisely like snow mountains: yet grander and higher than those of Switzerland. The rocks beyond Ilfracombe rise into higher and somewhat grander outline: rocks here grey, there covered with moss and furze. To our right; for we are still looking down the channel; lie Carmarthen Bay and Llanelly: and by-and-by the eye touches Swansea.

If we were but closer in shore to the English coast, what a glorious panorama would extend before us! But we are too far off to distinguish the waving of the trees, or hear the rustling of the leaves in the warm summer wind. Yonder lies a church, but we are unable to hear its chimes, which may be at this moment sending forth their sweet sounds. Everything is basking in the early sunshine, calm, peaceful, lovely as an idyll. None such indeed was ever written.

Pilot No. 3.

Eight bells. We have just taken on board a Channel pilot, in accordance with existing laws; and our own pilot retires into private life. The new importation declares that by three or four o'clock we shall be in Cardiff waters. J. protests he would do for the skipper of the Flying Dutchman, and is so tickled with his appearance that he sketches him on the spot.

Sleeping on the hill-side, we have just passed the harbour and port of Porthcawl. There lies the village of Dunraven, beyond rise the white lighthouses of the Nash Point. Behind that, embedded in a rich

cluster of trees, a picturesque break in the barren outline, peeps on the village of St. Donats. On the opposite side, almost facing the Nash Point, lies the exquisite village of Porlock. With the help of a glass we fancy that we can even trace the path, whence passing through Ashleigh some weeks ago we gazed down the wooded precipice with envy at the blue cool waters of the Channel. Beyond, lie Linton and Lynmouth. Now turning again to Wales in a slope in the rocks, rises, in the most unexpected and romantic manner, a small village, its houses peeping out amidst trees, which the pilot tells us is Nantwych. Looking up channel, we behold the Flat Holme and the Steep Holme, rising out of the water, and as it were bidding defiance to our approach. We are soon abreast of them, and now close in shore.

OUR CARDIFF LAUNDRESS.
A Sketch from Life.

It is a peculiar sensation, this near approach to land, after ten days' absence. Save straight ahead, land lies everywhere around us. We are almost ready to drop anchor. We feel that all things come to an end. In a very short time we shall be on terra firma again. What news awaits us? It seems like coming back to life, after a ten days' death. Has the world ceased to revolve? Have any riots broken out? Have the French and Germans shaken hands and sworn eternal friendship? Above all, says J., has Webb crossed the Channel? Many possibilities, we blush to say, interest us more than this undoubtedly wonderful feat.

There looms Penarth. The houses look hot and dusty in the sunshine. The church reminds us that it is Sunday afternoon, and that if we land we shall be in time for evening service. Across the water lies Weston. Ahead of us, Cardiff docks, enclosing a perfect forest of masts.

Now steady! With a rattling like thunder, down goes the anchor. Up comes our constant tug. We jump into her, and are quickly transported to shore. Landing, we look back at the noble ship, at anchor in the roads. We heave a deep sigh. Is it a mist that suddenly rises over the landscape and interrupts our vision? Our voyage is over. So, also, one day, Life's Voyage will also end, than this far longer and more tempest-tossed.

Before finally laying down the pen, let us, to the slight sketches that have gone before, add one more.

Again it is Sunday night: the Sunday following our arrival at Cardiff.

In pitch darkness we enter the village of Llandaff. Passing the ruin of the old gateway, we turn round and commence the descent towards the cathedral. For Llandaff Cathedral, strangely enough, is built in a hollow. It is so dark that we cannot see our hands before us. Arm in arm we grope our way downwards. Before us the windows, lighted up, serve, not to guide the steps, but to dazzle the eyes, and render the darkness yet more visible. At last we are on level ground. Pausing a moment to note the utter blackness, we open the door upon the full blaze of light. J. starts. It is like opening the door upon a vision of paradise. The body of the interior is brilliantly lighted up with a long

LLANDAFF CATHEDRAL.

By permission of Messrs. Catherall and Prichard, Chester.

row of gas jets on either side above the pillars. Beneath this light is assembled a crowd of worshippers. The further end of the beautiful building, the stalls, the organ, the communion table, are in shadow.

At this moment the organ bursts forth. If Gray were here, how would he appreciate the beauty of his own description :

> "Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
> The pealing anthem swells the note of praise."

With strange emotion we pass from the darkness into the light. A bedesman silently conducts up the long aisle through a crowd of people not yet seated, and bows us into the place where we would be: the shade and shelter of the stalls. Here, seeing but comparatively unseen, we indulge freely in the sublime aspirations of the moment: until the grand notes of the splendid instrument cease, and its echoes roll away in the distance, and service commences.

The prayers ended, we listen to the eloquence of the preacher; esteeming ourselves wonderfully favoured that this particular canon to-night occupies the pulpit. We hear him draw pictures and lessons from the life, and analyse the motives, of the unhappy Judas. As he closes, we catch ourselves wishing that it were our privilege to hear him oftener.

When the service is over, the organ bursts forth again, and for half an hour the building vibrates and echoes with sweet grand melodies; now soft and low, now shaking the very air. As the congregation leaves, we gradually work our way downwards: for music, like many other things, is best at a distance. Finding ourselves at length almost the last in the building, we, also, "with wandering steps and slow," turn to leave. As we open the door the last notes steal into the silent arches, and creep out into the open air, and die away into space: mingling perhaps—who knows?—far, far away with the melody of the harpers harping upon their harps that we are told of in the Book of the Revelation.

So once more we go forth into the darkness, and start on our walk back to Cardiff. For some time we are not very communicative: but both are agreed that this has been a fine night to look back upon for a last Sunday on shore.

C. W. W.

THE STORY OF MONIQUE.

By Julia Kavanagh.

SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST is the patron Saint of Manneville. On the twenty-fourth of June the little village wakens from its yearly quietness into clamorous life. High mass opens the festivities. White booths, that have sprung up in the night like so many mushrooms, are scattered on the "place," and all Manneville gathers there.

On the twenty-fourth of June some years ago, a youth and a little girl stood foremost in the crowd that had gathered round a wonderful collection of beasts, birds, and fishes, called "Noah's Ark." The youth, a tall, dark lad of seventeen, handsome and grave, looked on with stoic indifference, but the little girl was lost in admiration. She was about ten years old, fair as a lily, fresh as a rose, blue-eyed and fair-haired, a Norman blossom, with all the promise of Norman beauty in her delicate, refined features and her slender little figure.

"Come along, Monique, your uncle will be angry," said Sévère.

"Let me look at the bird, Sévère," entreated Monique. "It talks—oh!—so well."

"Only a magpie," was the curt answer.

"Oh! but such a magpie!"

"Monique, you know that Maître Louis David will be angry."

"Good-bye," said Monique to the magpie. The bird laughed shrilly, and answered, "Bonjour" in a little treble voice, and hopped in its cage with a mocking air.

"When are you coming?" asked Sévère.

"When I please," answered Monique, pertly; but when he turned away at once the child stole after him with a demure air, and followed him silently to the old abbey, which was turned into a farm-house in '93. They both lived there under the care of Maître Louis David, the uncle of Monique, and the fourth or fifth cousin of Sévère. Maître Louis had no daughters, and Monique, his brother's orphan child, was petted by him and his two stalwart sons after a fashion. Her elder brother Jean he had turned out of the house for bad conduct six months before this, and whenever he was out of temper—a frequent occurrence—he would say to his little niece, "Do you want to be sent after your brother, my girl?" Sévère, who was also an orphan, he had taken in more out of pride than from pity, not choosing that one who bore the name of David should be a servant in a strange house. The lad proved a good servant, but there was in him a haughty stubbornness which irritated his wealthy cousin. He was pitiless whenever he could find him at fault, and every day of his life he reminded him that h had long eaten the bread of charity.

Sévère only grew up harder, prouder, and more stubborn for the taunt. He cared for no one save little Monique. She tyrannized over him, but she also admired him prodigiously. "You are so clever, Sévère," she would say; "and you are strong, too—as strong as my uncle. And, oh! Sévère, I do love you!"

When the old farm, with its high slate roof, its broad, arched gateway and its two turrets, appeared before them in the warm sunlight, Monique suddenly stood still, and said, in coaxing accents, "Sévère, go and get that bird for me! Here is the two-franc piece uncle gave me. Try and get the bird for one franc or for thirty sous; but if you cannot, why, give the two francs, Sévère!"

The lad laughed outright. "Two francs for a magpie!" But Monique had been a spoiled child in her father's house, and warmly said she would give ten francs if she had them. Sévère, who held magpies cheap, thought her crazy. A fierce argument followed. He was worsted, of course, and taking Monique's silver coin, he went back alone to the place and to Noah's ark. Noah was refreshing himself with bread and cheese and a glass of cider when the canvas of his booth was raised, and Sévère's tall, straight figure appeared.

"How much will you take for your magpie?" said he, bluntly.

"Young man," answered Noah, incensed at his cool tone, "my magpie is not for sale."

"Take a franc?" said Sévère. "Well, then, thirty sous. Will you have two?" he impatiently added. And he held up the coin to tempt him.

"Two francs for a magpie that says 'Bonjour,' dances, and tells fortunes!" was the indignant answer.

"I will add a franc of my own," said Sévère, who could not believe in his anger. "Three francs for the magpie in its cage," he prudently added. But Noah, who was of an irritable temper, became so wroth on hearing this, that Sévère, cool and stubborn though he was, had to desist. He stared, raised his eyebrows, shrugged his shoulders, and walked out. He went straight back to the farm. The first thing he saw was Monique's fair head looking out of the window above the arched gateway.

"You have not got it," cried the child, in sudden wrath. "Oh! you wicked Sévère, you know you could have got it if you pleased."

Sévère laconically bade her wait till the day was over. Upon which Monique's face beamed with joy, and she called him a treasure.

Manneville ends its fête-day with a bonfire, which is kindled on the place. Sévère, Monique, and Thémire, a little girl of her own age, stood together, looking at the bright flames which lit the country round for miles.

"I like that," said Sévère emphatically.

"Yes, but Noah's ark is gone," sobbed Monique, "and the bird is gone, and ——" Another sob completed the sentence.

"Go home with her presently, Thémire," hastily said Sévère, and without waiting for an answer he was gone.

"The man shall sell that magpie to me," angrily thought Sévère, as he walked along the highroad that leads to St. Laurent. "I will add my five francs to her two. How can I look at Monique again if I do not get it. Besides, it will make her ill, as not going to the fair did last year. My poor little Monique! I will tell him so!"

But, alas! even this argument failed as much in its effect as the eight francs which Sévère magnanimously offered, and an hour later, after a quick walk to overtake the van, and a warm, though brief argument with its owner, the youth was slowly coming back to Manneville without the magpie. "What shall I say to her?" he thought, standing still near the great old oak which is called l'arbre à la croix. It is a thousand years old, people say, and it has lost many a bough and many a mighty limb in its long battle with time. "The beggarly mountebank," thought Sévère, looking at the tree, "to refuse eight francs for a magpie, and tell me it was worth more than all I or mine ever had! The ——"

"Bonjour," said a little shrill voice. Sévère gave a start and looked around him. The light from the bonfire was dying away, and the church spire rose dark against the glow that still lingered in the sky; but the moon shone broad and clear, and in her light he saw a little black thing hopping on the path before him, flapping its wings and looking like a goblin.

Monique had seen the last of the bonfire. She had come home with Thémire, and supped with her uncle and his sons upon douillons and cider. She was now in her little room, and had just knelt down to say her prayers, when a tap came at her door. Her heart beat. Had Germaine, her uncle's old servant, who ruled the house since the death of his wife, found her out in some delinquency?

"Open the door wide enough to let my hand in," said the voice of Sévère.

Monique obeyed. Sévère's strong brown hand appeared in the opening, and the next moment the magpie hopped on the floor, and greeted its new mistress with a shrill laugh.

"Oh! Sévère!" cried Monique, clapping her hands for joy. "How I love you!"

"You shall have a cage to-morrow," said Sévère, closing the door. And the next morning Monique had a bran-new osier cage, and the magpie was put in it and hung out at her window over the gateway, where he screamed "Bonjour" so loud that her uncle heard him. It was only a magpie, said Monique. Sévère had bought it at the fair, and given her two-franc piece for it.

A few days after this, Sévère was coming in rather late in the evening, when Monique met him under the great arched gateway and

said, breathlessly, "Oh, Sévère, uncle has just come back from the fair of Saint Laurent, and he looks so black, and your little old godfather is with him, and, Sévère, they want you at once—at once—in the great room."

Sévère knit his brows. The great room was rarely used save on judicial occasions, and he guessed what was coming; but he only uttered a careless "Very well," and went in to meet his fate.

"Sévère," said his cousin and master, giving him a hard, stern look, "how did you get the bird you sold to Monique for her two-franc piece."

"I found it in the wood. I did not sell her the bird. The two francs went for the cage."

"And I say you stole the bird," cried his master, starting to his feet, and shaking his fist at him. "And I have called in your godfather to tell you in his presence that I will have no thief in my house."

"I found the bird; I am no thief," said Sévère, sullenly, "but I am willing to leave you. Maître Mathieu wants a plough-boy—he will take me."

There was a pause. Sévère looked at his master, then at his godfather, a thin old man, who only shrugged his shoulders, and raised his eyebrows, as much as to say, "Your own look-out, my lad." The youth's brown cheek turned a little pale, perhaps, but he asked calmly what he was to do.

"To enlist, and never let us see your black face again," was the bitter answer.

Sévère's dark eyes seemed to flash fire as he replied, "I hope that I shall never see your face again, Maître Louis. I know that I have done wrong; but you know, too, that I am no thief; in your heart you know it. I only wanted to please Monique. As to fighting, I fear it no more than I feared hard work. I shall go to-morrow to Saint Laurent and enlist there."

Sévère was true to his word; he went and had his supper, and was silent over the meal as usual. When he walked out into the court, and saw to some work there, his godfather joined him, and slipping a franc piece in his hand, hoped this would be a warning to him. But Sévère thrust back the coin.

"Thank you, uncle," said he; "if I enlist I shall be provided for."

With cockcrow, Sévère rose, took his little bundle, and stole downstairs, hoping to meet no one; but Pascal, a ploughboy, a year older than himself, and with whom he had a feud of long standing, was already up. As Sévère went by him, his head erect, his bearing proud, but his significant bundle slung over his shoulder, Pascal laughed a low, jeering laugh. The lad's heart burned with wrath as he left the house; yet when he had passed beneath the arched gateway, he could not help looking up at little Monique's ivied window between the two turrets.

The cage was hanging outside, and the magpie screamed "Bonjour" to him, then laughed shrilly, as if it were such a good joke.

"I have not bidden her good-bye," thought Sévère, sadly; "it is better not."

Manneville was not awake yet, as he passed through its silent streets. He was soon on the road to Saint Laurent, and near the old oak. A panting breath and a pattering of little feet made him turn round. It was Monique, running through the high grass towards him. Monique with her head bare, and her clothes half on, and her naked feet all wet with dew, and the cage and the magpie in her hand.

"Oh! Sévère," she said, all out of breath, "how wicked of you to go and not say good-bye. I know—I know it is all the magpie. I listened at the keyhole yesterday, and I thought to see you this morning; and Pascal told me you were gone, and he laughed because I cried; and I know it is all the magpie, and I have brought him, and give him back, Sévère; and oh," she added, bursting into tears, "do not go."

She cried so bitterly that all Sévère could do at first was to make her sit down on the root of the old oak tree, and sitting down by her side to try and comfort her. A hard task, for Sévère could not say when he would come back. Never, so had he resolved in his inmost heart, would he live in the same place with the man who had insulted and injured him.

"And what shall I do when you are gone?" sobbed the child, "what shall I do, Sévère?"

"Yes," he answered, moodily, "they like you now, they make a toy of you; but when you grow up you will be a drudge in your grandfather's house. I used to think—Never mind, when they are too hard upon her, I will carry water for her and help her by stealth; for, Monique, your little hands were not made for rough work, and you ought not to spoil your pretty face over kitchen fires, and get red-eyed like old Germaine. Poor little Monique, if you would only stay little and pretty till I come back some day; but you will grow up, and I daresay they will make you marry Pascal, because he is your uncle's godson. But do not, Monique; let him marry Thémire, or anyone else. Never marry him; he is lazy, and will make you work like a slave."

Monique sobbed that she would never marry Pascal, and again entreated Sévère not to go.

"I must," he said, rising. "Look, there is the sun taking that grey cloak off, and showing us his red face above the green edge of the cornfield. I must go on, Monique, and you must go back, and take the bird home to your uncle."

"Bonjour," said a voice in the tree, and with a laugh the magpie flew away. Whilst they were talking, he had found the door of his cage loose, and slipped out, and now he was free.

"Go away, you bad bird," said Monique. "I hate you."

"Poor little Monique," sighed Sévère; "you too will be scolded for that magpie."

And now came the parting, and the last words, and the last tears, and Sévère's farewell kiss on either of Monique's tear-stained cheeks; and the lad was gone, and the child stood looking after him, her eyes so dim that she could not see, and the empty cage in her hand.

Eleven years had passed, and Maître Sévère David sat by the parlour window of his house in Fontaine, watching the people of Manneville going by on their way home from the fair of Saint Laurent.

"Now who is that," thought he, as a tall, dark peasant, with a grave, handsome face, which he seemed to know, came down the street, stopped at his door, and raising the latch, entered his room.

"Good morning, godfather," said he.

"Why, Sévère, is it you? and where is your knapsack?"

"I have not been a soldier these four years," answered Sévère, dryly. "I wrote it to you at the time."

Maître Sévère confessed remembering it, but was so evidently on his guard, that his godson said, impatiently:

"Uncle, I would not have your franc piece when we last parted, and I do not want your five-franc pieces now."

He spoke with the good-humoured assurance of a man of twenty-eight, whom life has taught, and Maître Sévère David's instinctive mistrust of a poor relative yielded to the evidence of his senses. The tall, strong, well-clothed man before him had not come as a supplicant; still prudence suggested a few questions. Maître Sévère remembered that his godson was manager or something on a farm in lower Normandy. How came he to have left so excellent a position? The old man was dead, answered Sévère; but he could go on another farm next his late master's to-morrow, if he pleased.

"Then why do you not?" asked his amiable relative. "Never lose such a chance as that."

"Thank you, uncle. I had a foolish fancy to see the old place again, and to know how you were all getting on. You are well, as I see, and I think I met Thémire a while ago. She has grown a pretty girl; and Maître Louis David is dead, they tell me; and how is little Monique?"

"Little Monique, indeed!" echoed his uncle. "Don't you know that six months back her two cousins died of the same fever, both childless, and that three months ago Louis died and left her all he had. Mamzelle Monique is a rich woman now, but it will not last. Everyone says it will not last. Louis made her promise not to keep her good-for-nothing brother in the house; but he comes and goes, and he will make short work of her money, unless she marries one of the gallants who are always after her: Médéric Chevallier, Vincent Blondel, and the lot of them."

"Little Monique with a lot of gallants?" said Sévère, seeming amused

"Well, uncle, you are giving me news; and now that I have seen you, I will go and have a look at Manneville," he added, rising, "so good-bye, for we may not meet for another dozen years. I am staying at the Silver Lion."

The fair was nearly over, and the people that came home from it having ceased to pass by Maître Sévère's window, he was leaving his post, when a Norman carriole stopped at his door, and a young woman in black alighted from it. He had scarcely caught a glimpse of her tall, light figure, when she walked in. She gave a quick, disappointed look round the room, then throwing back the hood of her mourning cloak, she showed him a fair and lovely face, with a rich crown of golden hair, scarcely hid by a little white cap.

"You have forgotten your little cousin Monique, Maître Sévère," said she, with a bright smile that lit the dull and dingy room.

"Ah! so you are Monique, are you?" said Maître Sévère, coolly, shading his eyes with his hand the better to see her. "Well, well," he added, more graciously, "sit down, Mamzelle Monique;" and after a pause, "Cousin, they tell no lies who say that you are a beautiful young woman."

Monique laughed carelessly, glanced at herself in a little tarnished mirror at the other end of the room, and said "Thank you, cousin."

"And your pretty little hands with such long white fingers," said Maître Sévère; "where did you get them, Monique? Not milking the cows or scouring the saucepans."

"Why should I?" answered she, shortly. "I am rich now."

"Get married, Mamzelle Monique, or you will not be rich long. Your good-for-nothing brother ——"

"We will not speak of him," she interrupted, impatiently. "Can you tell me, cousin, if Sévère David be really come back?"

Maître Sévère laconically replied that Sévère had come back. Monique's impatient questions soon drew the rest from him. In five minutes she knew all he had to tell. She heard him, leaning back in her chair, with her rosy cheek on her hand, and her dark blue eyes gazing on the floor.

"And so he means to stop at the Silver Lion," was the only comment she made. "Thank you, cousin; I must go. I see that Pascal can scarcely hold the mare. Do not forget to look in at me when you come to Manneville."

She wrapped her cloak around her, walked out, stepped into the carriole, and was gone in no time.

"Take me to the white house," said she to Pascal.

The white house is a farm on the road to Saint Laurent, with the owner of which Monique had business. Pascal pointed with his whip to the young green corn on either side of the road, and nodded. Yes was hers, and Monique knew it. Hers too was the great old oak, the

king of that wide corn land, that spread its mighty boughs in the summer air, on a background of pale blue summer sky.

"Why, surely that is Sévère," said Pascal, as they drove on again.

She looked, and saw a tall, dark man walking steadily along the road. He saw a fair woman driving past him, and it was over. It was Sévère. Monique stopped an hour at the white house. It was dark when she reached her own old farm. She asked at once who had come whilst she was away, and reddened when Germaine answered that Maître Jean was in the kitchen, with Maître Vincent Blondel, and Maître Médéric Chevallier, all waiting for the mistress of the house; they were also drinking her cider, and singing uproariously to beguile the time. With a raised colour Monique bade Germaine send out her brother to her, and when the message had been delivered, and the young man came out with bloodshot eyes and reeling steps, his sister, looking at him with a pale, grave face, signed him to enter the room where, eleven years before, Sévère David had heard his doom. "Jean," said she, coldly, "I am wearied of all this. It must cease. You fill this house with noise, you show a bad example to my servants, you waste my substance. It cannot last; you must come no more."

She left him and walked out. With a sore and troubled heart she went to the evening prayer in the church of Manneville. Old women whom the burdens of life troubled no more, mothers with their young ones clinging to them, little children ever looking round, labourers coming in from work, had met to pray; and Monique, sitting solitary on the great old oaken bench of the Davids, envied them all, and felt very lonely.

The Silver Lion is on the place of Manneville, looking at the church, as it were and, as it well may, being a decent inn, where even hard-drinking Normans are kept in order. Sévère was smoking outside the door, when the little congregation came out of the church in the cool twilight. Monique saw him at once, and went straight up to him. For a moment they were both silent.

"Sévère," she said at length, "have you forgotten Monique?"

"Has Monique remembered Sévère all these years?" he asked briefly.

"What would you have had me do?" said she, wondering.

"Do? Oh, nothing," was his careless answer.

She walked away in offended silence. He watched her going, then followed her, and soon stood by her side on the road that leads straight to the abbey.

"Monique," said he, holding out his hand, "I am going away to-morrow; let us be friends."

"And why do you go?" she asked, almost indignantly. "Was it only to look at the stones of Manneville you came back?"

"Who wants me here?" he retorted. "Not you, Monique: you are rich now: you want no one."

"I want a friend," answered Monique, very sadly. "It is no use telling you why; you do not care, and—you are going away."

They had gone on walking along the quiet road, which just then was very lonely. The fields stretched away on either side in the grey evening light. The new-mown hay filled the air with its wild, sweet scent; little moths flitted about and far away before them; a light burned in the old abbey, Monique's home, where her brother and his friends were carousing. Sévère could not see her face well, but from the sound of her voice he thought she was crying. He forgot the long oblivion which had stung him, he only remembered his old affection and her trouble.

"You know I cared for you once, Monique," he said; "why should I not care now?"

"Yes, you cared for me once," said Monique, still speaking sadly; "I thought of it as I drove past the old tree to-day—that tree by which we parted. I thought of it as I remembered what you had suffered for my sake. You cared for me once, Sévère, but I was a little child then—a poor one, too. Now I am rich, and I am a woman of twenty-one, and you care no more!"

He was silent; but with every word she spoke the little Monique of long ago rose before him. And the hardness which years and pride had brought round his heart seemed to melt away.

"What can I do for you?" he asked.

"What you will not do, Sévère," she answered. "I am rich, but I have an enemy in my own flesh and blood, from whom no one will defend me. People bid me marry. I will not; I will be Monique David, and no more."

"What can I do for you?" he asked again.

"What you are going to do for a stranger," she said, with sudden eagerness. "Take the management of my farm, and save me from the misery that turns my inheritance into a curse. I shall interfere with nothing—nothing. You shall be master on the land—sow, reap, till, buy, and sell as you please, and you will deliver me from a yoke which makes my old hard days of servitude seem a blessed time."

Sévère did not answer. There was a long silence, during which Monique's heart beat fast.

"And when you marry?" he said at length.

"I tell you I shall not marry. Shall I promise?" she added, half in jest, half in earnest.

"There is no need, Monique. When you marry, I go. I may have a mistress, but I will have no master."

All Manneville conned and wondered when Sévère became Monique's vicegerent, and Jean was virtually excluded from his sister's little dominions. In vain he clamoured and upbraided. She pleaded her uncle's behests, and was firm; and Sévère, impervious to reproach or

blame, simply said: "I am here to manage Mademoiselle Monique's farm, and I have nothing to do with you." With his new mistress Sévère was as cool and civil as if they had always been strangers. And so weeks and months went by.

One November morning, Germaine grumbled so hard at some orders which she had just received from her young mistress, that the overflow of her indignation reached Sévère's ears in the yard. He sharply asked what she was saying about Mademoiselle Monique.

"Mamzelle Monique, indeed!" echoed Germaine. "What was she before Maître Louis died?"

"She was our master's niece, and now she is our mistress," was the brief reply.

"Yes; and you have the high hand now," sneered Germaine; "but wait till young Blondel, or Médéric, or any of them, turns our Mamzelle into Madame!"

Sévère looked gloomily at the grey old walls and straggling brown roof of the farm, then he frowned as a flock of geese strutted past him, and without looking at Germaine, he asked what she meant.

Germaine half leaned out of the kitchen window, and said, mysteriously: "Blondel is her cousin, and Médéric's mother is coming, and she has the others for the look of it; and the best turkey is to be killed, and we are to get seven pounds of beef from the butcher's, and we shall all have meat soup to-morrow."

"Who cares about meat soup?" asked Sévère, walking away.

Germaine, who had never liked him, nodded her white cap at him, and went back to her cooking.

Sévère had to go out on business that day, but he came back before supper. He found his young mistress in the kitchen, talking there to Thémire, now the best dressmaker in Manneville, who had come in the afternoon to alter the fashion of a dress.

The two girls stood side by side in the lamplight, and set off one another. Thémire was short, dark, and very pretty. She had quick black eyes, a little, pert, turned-up nose, dimples, and the prettiest little white teeth in the world; and Monique, when seen near her, looked fairer, taller, and more lovely than ever, a Norman maid, with almost classic features, and the bloom of a rose on her fair young face. Thémire was ardently pleading the cause of gimp trimming for sleeve-cuffs.

"But could it be ready for the morning?" asked Monique; and Thémire bravely volunteered to sit up all night, if it were needful.

Monique smiled sweetly, and had begun to say this would be a pity, when her eye fell on Sévère, who stood near the door, looking on.

"I did not know you had come back, Sévère," she said. "Do you want me?"

"I want to give you money," he answered; and he brought out a bagful of five-franc pieces, which he laid on the table before her.

"And so he has actually paid you," said Monique, admiringly. "How did you manage, Sévère?"

"I asked for the money, and he gave it," replied Sévère, quietly; and in the same breath, "Is it true, Mademoiselle Monique, that Maître Vincent Blondel is coming to-morrow?"

"Yes," answered Monique, "he is coming; he is my cousin, you know. Why do you ask, Sévère?"

"I want to know how prices went at the last fair down his way," answered Sévère. Then he turned to leave the kitchen, and without looking round, closed the door after him.

Sévère went straight up to his own room, in a remote part of the farm. He changed his clothes, put on his best blouse, his smartest cap, and his new necktie (a present Monique had made him); then, knowing that supper was over, he went back to the kitchen. Thémire was gone, and Monique had retired to a little parlour where she always sat alone in the long winter evenings. "As if she were too good for the kitchen," Germaine often muttered under her breath.

"Well, and what do you want?" she asked, as Sévère's tall form darkened the doorway. "Supper is over, and the kitchen is mine."

"And so is the poultry, Germaine. I want a fat turkey."

Germaine, amazed, asked what he could want a fat turkey for. Sévère replied that he wanted to make a present of it to his godfather, whose saint's day it was, and added that he was in a hurry.

"Have Gogo," said Germaine, producing a magnificent turkey. "Another will do as well for Vincent and Médéric and the lot of them to-morrow. Take Gogo at seven francs, Sévère."

After some bargaining, he took Gogo at six francs fifty, tied him up in a clean handkerchief, and walked out.

Maître Sévère David's house was the last of the high street in Fontaine. He lived alone in it, after his own miserly fashion.

"Good night to you, godfather," said Sévère as he entered the house. "To-morrow is your fête-day, and so I came to-night to give you my best wishes, for we are busy just now, and I must be home before day."

"And what have you got there?" asked Maître Sévère, peering in the dim light of the rush candle he held.

"Only a turkey for you," replied Sévère, as they entered the kitchen together; and taking Gogo out of his handkerchief, he placed him on the table.

Maître Sévère quietly set down his iron candlestick near Gogo, and without giving that luckless bird a look, he laid his thin hand on the young man's shoulder and said, deliberately:

"My boy, you want something from me. My fête-day comes round every year, but never before did you give me a turkey."

Sévère's bronzed cheek reddened a little, but he tried to reply care-

lessly: "Of course I want something from you, uncle; but as to the turkey, I got it cheap, though it is a fine one. Look at its breast, white as milk and tender like a chicken."

Norman cider plays sad havoc with Norman teeth, and this insidious praise of Gogo's breast was assailing Sévère's godfather in a tender point. He took the turkey, weighed it in his hand, poked it all over, and said, with a chuckle, "I never saw such a fine bird, so white, so plump, and cheap, too."

"Not too cheap," answered Sévère. "I suppose I may sit down, uncle."

The old man nodded, but did not sit down himself. To all appearance he was taken up with Gogo, on whom he pronounced quite a panegyric. Such a turkey; so large, so plump.

"Uncle," interrupted Sévère, "you said I wanted something from you. Suppose you hear what it is."

Maître Sévère's small grey eyes twinkled; he drew his chair to the hearth, looked at the faint embers burning there, and laying his hands on his knees, he set his head on one side and listened to his godson.

"Uncle, I want to marry Mademoiselle Monique."

Maître Sévère David whistled softly. "Well, marry her," he said, blandly.

"She is rich and I am poor," said Sévère. "I cannot ask her to become my wife, when all I have is the wages I earn with her. But if you, godfather, who have plenty of money and no children, would give me—say ten thousand francs, I could try my chance."

Maître Sévère did not receive this proposal with the indignation his nephew and godson had expected, and was prepared to combat. He smiled, nodded, and said, "You think you would succeed, do you? Then I suppose Monique is fond of you."

"Monique is fond of no one," answered Sévère, dryly, "and if they would let her alone, she would stay as she is till doomsday. But she likes me well enough, and she is accustomed to me. I am useful to her, and I might have a chance."

"I do not mind leaving you the money in my will," answered the old man, who, when he looked at Gogo, and feared to lose him, was bent on conciliation.

"What is a will?" scornfully asked Sévère. "It must be ten thousand francs down or nothing. I must enter her house more than a beggar, or stay as I am!"

"Then stay as you are! Ten thousand francs down!—that would be a dear turkey."

"Well, uncle," said Sévère, "you are master of your money, and it is not because you have said me nay that we need be worse friends. I have asked and been denied, and there is an end to the matter. And now I must be off, and so good-night."

His uncle faintly asked him to take some refreshment, but Sévère wanted nothing, and said so, and with that they shook hands and parted.

"He did not take back the turkey, after all," thought Maître Sévère, looking meditatively at Gogo. "I never saw so white and plump a bird —never. I must leave him something in my will—I really must." By which, of course, Maître Sévère did not mean Gogo.

Monique's guests all came the next day, as Germaine had announced. Sévère saw nothing of them, for he stayed out till night. When he came home late, Germaine gave him a full account of the festivities, and declared that the way Mamzelle Monique managed her lovers was something to see. "But I think it will be Médéric," was Germaine's conclusion. "They are all staying till to-morrow; but I fancy Médéric and his mother remain till after Sunday."

Sévère heard this with stoic indifference; but the next morning, as Monique was feeding her hens, he suddenly appeared by her side.

"I have a word or two to say to you, Mademoiselle Monique," said he, bluntly.

She looked round at him, and was struck with the stern gravity of his aspect.

"It is just this," he continued; "that if these young fellows come to the house, I must leave it. I am willing to go on as we are—you and I—till I am threescore, and you not much less; but if they keep coming to the house, I must leave it. I do not threaten. It would not be my place to do so; but I give you fair warning. I must not stay!"

"Say that you will not, Sévère," replied Monique, coldly.

"Because I cannot," he rejoined, in a low tone.

"And why can you not?" she asked, a little defiantly.

"You know," said he, turning his back upon her.

The colour faded from Monique's rosy cheeks, and she stood as he had left her, looking like one stricken.

The horses at the farm were always watered beyond the low, straggling outhouses, in a little curve of the river, over which tall trees bent their heavy boughs in the summer time. A pale and misty November moon was looking in through the leafless branches, when Sévère, coming in from the fields, led the team of noble grey Norman mares which called Monique mistress, to the rippling edge of the little river. The white moonbeams played on the surface of the water, and the horses drank with their heads bent low, when Sévère became aware of something like a shadow beside him. He looked up, and at once recognized Monique. She had come out of the farm through a side door, and stood by him as silent and still as any ghost.

"Do you want me, Mamzelle Monique?" asked Sévère.

"You will not go?" said she.

"Not unless I must," was his answer.

"Because," faltered Monique, "they all leave to-morrow, and I do not think any of them will care to come back!"

"And I shall not go and look for them, you may be sure," was all Sévère said.

Nothing else worthy of note took place that winter; nothing until spring was over, and summer came round.

The garden which stretched along the banks of the little river was not much to boast of, but Monique was fond of it, especially in the evening time, when the water was alive with fire and gold, and the trees on the opposite bank rose dark and still on the blue sky. She liked to watch the stars coming out one by one, to breathe the fragrance of her flowers, and perhaps, too—for Monique was young—to remember the past and dream of the future. It was a place where no one ever sought her or intruded on her privacy; and one evening, when she stood there watching the river flowing on to the sea, Monique could not help giving a little start as she heard and saw Sévère coming towards her.

"Mademoiselle Monique," he said, abruptly, "I have something to tell you!"

"What is it, Sévère?" she asked, quietly.

"I am going to get married," he answered, with something like flurry in his manner.

Monique was standing by a rose-tree. She plucked a rose, and let it fall with a start. A sharp thorn had pierced her hand.

"Well," she said, wiping the blood off with her handkerchief, what about it, Sévère? You have a right to marry, I suppose!"

"I have," he coolly answered; "and if I tell you about it, Mademoiselle, it is that you may know my marrying will make no change. Thémire and I will live in a home of our own, of course, but I shall be none the less upon the farm than I am now."

"Thémire!" slowly repeated Monique; "it is Thémire whom you marry?"

"Oh! only after the harvest. I never spoke to her till this afternoon!"

Monique laughed.

"How fond of one another you must have been all this time to make it up so quickly," she said. "You never spoke till this afternoon, and yet you are to be married when the harvest is over! Poor Thémire must have been breaking her heart for you, Sévère!"

"Thémire will never break her heart for anyone; but she will make me an honest wife," answered Sévère coldly; "and I told you about it, Mademoiselle Monique, because, as she is working in your house to-day, it is fair you should know."

He waited awhile; Monique was silent. Then he bade her good-night, and without looking round, "Good-night, Sévère," answered she

She lingered awhile longer in the garden, listening to the murmuring voice of the river, then she went back to the house, crossing the yard.

As she passed by the window of the kitchen, from which a ruddy glow streamed out, she paused and gave a look within. Thémire was stitching away by lamplight; Sévère stood by her, leaning against the high and massive stone chimney. He said something which Monique did not hear, but Thémire put down her work to glance laughingly up in his face. And with her black eyes, her little turned-up nose, her cherry mouth, and her dimples, Thémire looked very pretty. Sévère remained grave, but there was kindness in his downward gaze. Monique looked at him awhile, then walked back to the garden. She went and sat on the river bank, and stayed there till the white stars shone through chill mists, and she rose shivering.

Germaine had just left the kitchen, and Thémire was alone in it, when the young mistress of the house entered it. Her fair cheeks were somewhat flushed, an unusual light shone in her blue eyes. "Was not Sévère here?" said she, looking round for him.

Thémire demurely replied that Sévère was gone to the barber's to get shaved, and offered to call him. Monique laughed a little bitterly. "That would be a pity" she said, "for she was sure Thémire liked Sévère better without than with his beard."

"But what have I to do with Sévère's beard?" cried Thémire, reddening; "he may wear it a yard long for all I care."

"You would not like it a yard long on your wedding-day," retorted Monique. "Come Thémire, Sévère has told me you are to marry him after the harvest."

"Then, if Sévère is shaving for that, let him keep his beard," angrily said Thémire." "After the harvest! why, I might if I chose have been Pascal's wife this spring."

"Ah! but Thémire did not care for Pascal, and she was fond of Sévère," said Monique, smiling, a remark which added to Thémire's indignation. Fond of Sévère! a surly fellow who asked one to marry him, and had not even a kind word to say! Pascal was a much pleasanter young man, thought Thémire, though Mademoiselle Monique had never liked him. But this, too, turned out to be a mistake. With a blush, Monique assured Thémire that she had always liked Pascal. "Was he not her uncle's godson, and when he marries," added Monique, looking straight before her, "I shall give him a thousand francs. For Sévère of course I can do nothing of the kind; though I really like him too. I can only give him a silver watch; but do not tell him so, Thémire."

"Tell him Mademoiselle Monique might give him a dozen watches, for all Thémire cared. He might say she was going to marry him, but she, Thémire, had promised nothing of the kind. Besides, she knew it would break Pascal's heart, and that went against her conscience."

"Sévère has savings," began Monique.

"Mademoiselle Monique, I do not think of the money," said Thémire,

virtuously, "but I cannot make Pascal unhappy. I shall tell Sévère so, and I hope he will not be after me or worry me, because it will be of no use," said Thémire, resolutely.

"But suppose Sévère should be angry," suggested Monique. Perhaps you had better keep out of his way, Thémire."

The two girls laid their heads together, and when Germaine came back with the cider that she had been drawing, she learned that Thémire, seized with a sudden and violent headache, had been obliged to take her work home, and leave without her supper. Monique said this so low, that Sévère, who was coming in, scarcely heard her; but Pascal heard, and gave him a scowl that meant, "this is your doing."

Monique was very silent during the meal. Sévère never opened his lips, and every now and then Pascal uttered a low groan, which made Germaine ask him what he meant by grunting so.

"I know," sulkily answered Pascal, and again he scowled at Sévère, who was looking at Monique's pale, grave face.

Early the next morning, Pascal, to his great surprise, was sent by his young mistress to Thémire's house with a piece of trimming for the dress which she had taken away to finish at home. He soon came back looking sheepish, exchanged a few words with Monique in the yard, then went his way. A little before now, Monique, with her round straw hat on, passed by the door of the kitchen where Germaine sat picking vegetables. "I am going to look at the reapers," said she.

The morning was a hot one. The fierce sun poured down on a land of yellow corn. There was not a cloud in the deep blue of the sky, not a breath of air stirred the leaves of the trees that grew by the road, along which walked Monique. Now and then she stood still and gazed dreamily before her. On either hand stretched broad fields of wheat, and they were hers. "I am a rich woman," thought Monique, with a weary sigh, "a very rich woman, the richest woman in all Manneville! and—where is the use of it all." So she went on till she came to the reapers.

Monique went amongst the men who had nearly cleared the field, and did her best to be gracious; but Sévère, who eyed her closely, saw well enough that her mind was ill at ease. Her words were hesitating and low, her smile was troubled, her eyes shunned his, and when she at length turned away, there was a look of relief on her face. He walked to the end of the field with her, then was leaving her with a quiet "Good morning, Mademoiselle Monique."

"Walk a little way with me, Sévère," she said in a very low tone.

He followed her without a word along a narrow path which passed through the waving corn. When they came to the spot where the great oak with the cross in it flung its broad shadow round, Monique stood still.

"Have you seen Thémire to-day, Sévère?" she asked.

Sévère replied that he had not. He spoke very calmly, but never took his eyes off Monique's face. She was pale and flushed by turns, and her little white hand was nervously shelling the tall ears of corn by which she stood.

"She is not coming to the farm to-day," resumed Monique hesitatingly. "I thought it better not."

Sévère said not a word.

"I believe," continued Monique after a pause, "that there must have been some mistake in what you told me yesterday, Sévère, for—for—Thémire, I fancy, is going to marry some one else."

"Whom else?" sharply asked Sévère.

"Pascal," answered Monique, without looking up.

"How do you know it?" And as he put the question, Sévère bent his keen eyes upon her face.

"Pascal has just told me so."

"But you had a long talk with Thémire last night," said Sévère briefly. "I saw you both in the kitchen."

Monique coloured, raised her head proudly, and scorned to deny.

"Yes, Thémire and she had had a long talk."

"And what did you do, or promise to do, that she veered like a little weather-cock (which she is, and always was," added this fond lover) "from Sévère to Pascal?"

"I only told her the truth," said Monique a little angrily, "that I would give Pascal a thousand francs when he married, and to you a silver watch."

"Thank you!" laughed Sévère. "And now," he resumed after a pause, "shall I tell you what you have done, Monique? You have sent me for ever away from Manneville, and whether I am useful to you or not, whether the farm will thrive or go to ruin, when I am no longer there to stand between you and the set of plunderers whose business it seems to be to rob you—I must go."

"Why so?" asked Monique, looking scared.

"When I told you, last night, that I was going to marry Thémire, what did you think was my motive?" asked Sévère very gravely.

"I thought you liked her," faltered Monique.

"And therefore you did your best that another should have her," said Sévère bitterly. "Well, let that be; after a fashion I liked her. She has no more head than a linnet, but she is honest. She did not care for me, but she would never have been a false wife, and I—why I would have made her a good husband, as husbands go, but as I said, what did you think was my motive for taking her? Why, this: that I found out we two, you and I, could not stay as we are, and now I must go, Monique, and it is your doing."

"But I cannot let you go, Sévère," said Monique pitifully, "you

know I cannot do without you. You know that my brother will come back if you leave me. How can you talk of going?"

"Is it possible you do not understand," said Sévère almost angrily, "Can you not guess that, thanks to your brother, Manneville has been busy with our two names, and that, since you would not let me marry Thémire, why, I must go, or—you must marry me," he added with a bitter laugh.

The blood left Monique's cheeks, and her very lips were white. For awhile she could not speak, then she said in a low tone:

"Well, Sévère, and would that be so hard?"

For a moment he was silent. The noonday hour was very still; then suddenly a little breeze rose and passing in the great green boughs of the old tree shook them; and the tall red poppies, and the blue corn-flowers shivered gladly as they felt the sweet breath of the sea. Strong man though he was, Sévère shivered too as the words of Monique fell upon his heart.

"You mean it!" he said at length.

Monique hung her head and was mute.

"You mean it!" he said again; "you mean that you will marry me." And the passionate longing of the last year was in his voice and in his look.

"Why not?" was all she answered at length, for, Norman like, she could not give him a plain yea or nay.

"Monique, Monique," he cried, with a sort of anguish, "do you care for me, or is it only that you want me!"

Monique shook her pretty head and laughed, though there were tears in her eyes.

"It is not that," said she; "it is all the magpie, for you have forgotten, Sévère, but I—I remember."

"Now, who is that?" thought Maître Sévère David as a loud knock came at his door late one Saturday evening.

"Let me in, uncle," cried Sévère's clear ringing voice, "I have something for you."

A vision of another Gogo flitted across Maître Sévère's mind as he went and let his godson in; but Sévère only brought a most wonderful tale. He was going to marry Monique. Their banns were to be published the next morning and not wishing to marry her from her own house, he came to ask his uncle to give him a bed for a week.

"You are going to marry Monique," said Maître Sévère. "Then" added he, striking a great blow on the table with his fist, "you shall have the ten thousand francs. That sneak Jean shall not have it to say that my nephew married his sister and had never a sou."

And this is the story of Monique.

A FABLE OF MODERN SOCIETY.

By Mrs. JEROME MERCIER, Author of "Five o'clock Tea."

AN old white owl dwelt in the ivy-tod of the parson's gable: she had had a large family, and was deeply experienced. All the birds had been accustomed to hold her in great respect until an upstart family of starlings came and built close by. They were quite parvenus. No one knew where their ancestors came from: they had not the slightest pretence of being descended from the Simorg, or from a collateral branch of the Dodos; and so, of course, they were quite out of court when *Family* was spoken of. But they went in for new ideas, for culture, for sweetness and light; they had spent quite three weeks of the spring at school under Professor Jack Daw, and they knew so much that they were always trying to analyse everything; indeed, their grammar was almost painful, for they actually used the subjunctive mood in the right place.

When they settled on the parsonage roof, the old white owl was kind enough to call upon them. They received her in a nest from which the down was carefully excluded, for every well-educated bird knows that rigid simplicity is in the highest taste, and that, in fact, to be artistic, one must always be slightly uncomfortable.

"I hope you will like our roof," said my Lady Owl to Mrs. Starling, with the utmost kindness. "It is at once warm and airy. When you get a little down in your nest, you will feel quite settled."

The three Miss Starlings looked at each other with a meaning smile, and their mother replied, in the tone of one who imparts information, "We do not use down now-a-days; the white is so trying to the eye, so glaring, so crude. We introduce a little moss sometimes; but my daughters really prefer the elegant simplicity of the twig."

"Hum! ha!" said old Lady Owl, beginning to glare a little through her spectacles, for she felt that for the first time since she forgot the egg-shell, she was actually being instructed. "I don't find the elegant simplicity of the twig very easy to sit upon; I prefer something soft, myself."

"All a matter of education, dear Lady Owl, I assure you," answered Mrs. Starling. "My girls have learned deportment from Monsieur Wagtayle de l'Eau, and you observe they find it perfectly easy to recline with comfort."

"Comfort is felt rather than seen," said the owl. "I suppose the same foreign gentleman taught them to dress."

She looked with strong disapproval at the young ladies, who had evidently omitted to plume their feathers for some days past; about the head they seemed absolutely to foam, whereas, on the bodies, by some

arrangement of frequently standing under a dripping gutter, they were sleek to an extent which allowed the shape of their bones to be clearly visible.

"No, no," replied Mrs. Starling, playfully, but with a superior smile, "no French art for us in dress; we must return to the graceful forms of the middle ages. Mr. Hernshaw gave lectures at the college which my daughters attended, and of course, you know, there is no disputing his dicta. As to colour, you shall see my next batch of eggs. They are quite of that new delightful blue."

"Fiddle-de-dee!" muttered Lady Owl, fairly losing patience with these people, who had no connection with either the Simorgs or the Dodos, yet pretended to give themselves airs.

Mrs. Starling, being a little deaf, and blinded by intense family complacency, supposed the above to be a murmur of admiration and astonishment.

"It is really not difficult, even at your age, dear Lady Owl," she said, benignly; "you have but to consider harmony and form. I believe there is indeed some reference to the ancient Egyptians in the arrangement of the head, but my Guinevere can just ruffle your feathers with a straw or two, and if you are not afraid of rheumatism, ten minutes under that delicious gurgoyle will reduce ——"

"Ruffle my feathers! You have done that, madam, without any necessity for a straw or two. Allow me, Mrs. Starling, to remark that when strangers come to settle in a place like this, where the old aristocracy have been accustomed to meet with deference, they will find it the best plan, if they want to make their way in society, not to air their peculiar hobbies at every turn. Where people are so startingly new in their notions, it leads one to suspect that they have no family traditions whatever to look back upon."

"Oh! family traditions! dear Lady Owl, we have changed all those foolish prejudices."

"Have you, indeed! Then I will bid you a very good morning, and return to my family prejudices in my own warm nest."

Lady Owl, notwithstanding her age, her indignation, and the stiffness induced by the hardness of her seat, made a bow of extreme dignity and retired. No one else dared to call on the Starlings, and they remained alone to mourn the ignorance of their neighbours in the very choicest language.

GINA MONTANI.

By the Author of "East Lynne."

PART THE FIRST.

I.

IN one of the sunniest spots of sunny Tuscany, that favoured department of Italy, may still be seen the ruins of a strong, ancient-built castle, or palace, surrounded by extensive grounds now run to waste; and which was, a century or two ago, one of the proudest buildings in that balmy land.

It was on an evening of delicious coolness, there so coveted, that a cavalier issued on horseback from the gates of the castle, which was then at the acme of its pride and strength. Numerous retainers stood on either side by the drawbridge, their heads bared to the evening sun, until the horseman should have passed; but he went forth unattended: and then the men resumed their caps, and swung-to the drawbridge, as he urged his horse to a quick pace. It was the lord of that stately castle, the young inheritor of the lands of Visinara. His form, tall and graceful, was bent occasionally to the very neck of his horse, in acknowledgment of the homage that was universally paid him, though he sat his steed proudly, as if conscious that such bearing befitted the descendant of one of Italia's noblest families. In years he had numbered scarcely more than a quarter of a century, and yet on his beautiful features might be traced a shade, which told of perplexity and care.

Turning down a narrow and not much frequented way which branched off from the main road, a mile or two distant from his residence, he at length came in view of one of those pretty places, partly mansion, partly cottage, and partly temple, at that period to be seen in Italy; but which we *now* meet with rarely, save in pictures. Fastening the bridle of his charger to a tree, he walked towards the house, and passing down the colonnade which ran along the south side of it, entered one of the rooms through the open window.

A lady, young and beautiful, sat there alone. She had delicate features, and a fair, open countenance, the complexion of which resembled more that of an English than an Italian one, inasmuch as a fine, transparent colour was glowing on the cheeks. The expression of her eyes was mild and sweet, and her hair, of a chestnut brown, fell in curls upon her neck, according to the fashion of the times. She started visibly at sight of the count, and her tongue gave utterance to words, but what she apparently knew not.

"So you have returned, signor?"

"At last, Gina," was the count's answer, as he stole his arm round her slender waist, and essayed to draw her affectionately towards him.

"Unhand me, Count di Visinara!" she impetuously exclaimed, moving away; and her whole form trembled with agitation.

He stood irresolute; aghast at the reception from her, who was his early and dearest love.

"Are you out of your senses?" was his exclamation.

"No, but I soon shall be. Better for insanity to fall upon me, than experience the wretchedness of these last few days."

"My love, my love, what mean you?"

"*My love*! call you *me* your love, Count di Visinara! Be silent, hypocrite! I know you now. Cajoled that I have been in listening to you so long!"

"Gina!"

"And so the honourable Count di Visinara has amused his leisure hours in making love to Gina Montani!" she cried, vehemently. "The lordly chieftain who——"

"Be silent, Gina!" he interrupted. "Before you continue your strange accusations, tell me the origin of them. My love has never wandered from you."

"Yet you are seeking a wife in the heiress of Della Ripa!" was her quick retort. "Ah, Sir Count, your complexion changes now!"

Gina Montani was right: the flush of excitement on his face had turned to paleness.

"Your long and repeated journeys, for days together, are now explained," she continued. "It was well to tell me business took you from home."

"I have had business to transact with the Prince of Della Ripa," he replied, boldly, recovering his equanimity.

"And to combine business with pleasure," she answered, with a curl of her delicate lip, "you have been wont to linger by the side of his daughter."

"And what though I have sometimes seen the Lady Adelaide?" he rejoined. "I have no love for her."

Gina was silent for awhile, as if struggling with her strong emotion, and then spoke calmly.

"My mother has enjoined me, times out of mind, not to suffer your continued visits here, for that you would never speak of marriage. You never will, Giovanni."

"Turn to my faith, Gina," he exclaimed, with emotion, "and I will marry thee to-morrow."

"They say you are about to marry Adelaide of Della Ripa," she replied, passing by his own words with a gesture.

"They deceive you, Gina."

"*You* deceive me," she answered, passionately; "you upon whose veracity I would have staked my life. And this is to be my reward!"

"You are like all your sex, Gina—when their jealousy is aroused, good-bye to reason. One and all are alike."

"Can you say that in this case my suspicions are unfounded?"

"Gina," he answered, as he once again would have drawn her to his heart, "let us not waste the hours in vain recriminations. *I have no love for Adelaide of Della Ripa.*"

He spoke with the emphasis of truth, and she suffered herself to believe him. How credulous is the heart of a woman when she loves!

They sat in the garden when the heat of the sun had passed; her hand in his, her ear bent to his honeyed words. In one sense they were true enough, those whispers, for his love was all hers: and once more they were happy together as of old.

But this was not to last. As the weeks and the months flew on, the visits of the count grew few and far between. He made long stays at the territory of Della Ripa, and people told it as a fact, no longer disputable, that he was about to make a bride of the Lady Adelaide.

They had come strangers into Tuscany, the Signora Montani and her daughter, but a year or two before. The signora was in deep grief for the loss of her husband, she was also in ill health, and they lived the most secluded life, making no acquaintances. They were scarcely known by name or by sight; and, save the Count di Visinara, no visitors were ever found there. The signora was of northern extraction, and of the Reformed faith, and had reared her daughter in the principles of the latter, which of itself would cause them to court seclusion, at that period, in Italy. And the Lord of Visinara, independent and haughty as he was by nature and by position, would not have dared to take Gina Montani to be his wedded wife.

II.

It was on a calm moonlight night that a closely-wrapped-up form stood in the deep shade of a grove of cypress-trees, within the gates of the Castle of Visinara, anxiously watching.

Parties passed and repassed, and the figure stirred not; but now there came one, the very echo of whose footsteps had command in it, and the form advanced stealthily, and glided out of its hiding-place, right upon the path of the Lord of Visinara. He stood still, and faced the intruder.

"Who are you?—and what do you do here?"

"I came to bid you farewell, Sir Count; to wish you joy of your marriage!" And, throwing back the mantle and hood, Gina Montani's fragile form stood out to view.

"You here, Gina!"

"Ay; I have struggled long—long. Pride, resentment, jealousy—I have struggled fiercely with them; but all are forgotten in my unhappy love."

He drew her closely to him, as in their happy days.

"You depart to-morrow morning on your way to bring home your bride. I have seen your preparations—I have watched the movements of your retainers. No farewell was given me—no word offered of consolation—no last visit vouchsafed."

It would seem that he could not gainsay her words, for he made no reply.

"Know you how long it is since we met?" she continued; "how long——"

"Reproach me not," he interrupted. "I have suffered more than you. And, for a farewell visit, I did not dare to trust myself."

"And so this is to be the end of your enduring love, that you said was to be mine, and only mine, till death!"

"And before Heaven I spoke the truth. I have never loved—I never shall love but you. Yet, Gina, what would you have me do? I may not speak to you of marriage; and it is necessary to my position that I wed."

"*She* is of your own rank, therefore you have wooed her?"

"And of my own faith. Difference of rank may be overcome; of faith, never."

"Oh, that the time had come when God's children shall be all of one mind, of one faith!" she uttered. "In later ages, this peace may be upon the earth."

"Would it were, Gina! Or that you and I had never met him!"

"What, do *you* wish it!" she retorted. "You, who voluntarily sever yourself from me!"

"I have acted an honourable part, Gina," he cried, striding to and fro, in his agitation.

"*Honourable*, did you say?"

"Ay, honourable. You were growing too dear to me, and I could not speak of marriage to you."

There was a long pause. She was standing against one of the cypress-trees, the moon, through an opening above, casting its light upon her pure face, down which were coursing tears of anguish.

"So henceforth we must be brother and sister," he whispered.

"Brother and sister," she repeated, in a moaning voice, pressing the cold tree against her aching temples.

"After awhile, Gina, when time shall have subdued our feelings. Until then we may not meet."

She was startled by the words into sudden pain. "Will you not come here? Shall we never see you here?"

"Nay, Gina, I must not do so great wrong to the Lady Adelaide."

"So great wrong!" she exclaimed, in amazement.

"Not real wrong, I am aware. But I shall undertake at the altar to love and cherish her; and though I cannot do the one, I will the other.

Knowing that I cannot love her, I would be doubly careful of her feelings."

"I see, I see," interrupted the young lady, indignantly; "*her* feelings must be respected, whilst mine——"

"And for my own sake," he added, in a whisper.

"And my poor sick mother, to whom your visits have been as a balm?—But I see: I see. Farewell, Giovanni."

"One word yet, Gina," he said, detaining her. "You will probably hear of me much—foremost in the chase, gayest in the ball-room, last at the banquet—the gay, fortunate Lord of Visinara; and when you do so, remember that that gay lord wears about him a secret chain, suspected by and known to none—a chain, some links of which will remain entwined around his heart to his dying day, though the gilding that made it precious must from this time moulder away. Know you what the chain is, Gina?"

The suffocating sobs were rising in her throat, and she made no answer.

"*His love for you.* Fare thee well, my dearest and best. Nay, another instant; it is our last embrace in this world."

III.

It was a princely cavalcade that bore the heiress of Della Ripa to her new territories, and all eyes looked out upon it. The armour of the warlike retainers of the house of Visinara sparkled in the sun, and the more peaceful servitors were attired with a gorgeousness that would have done honour to an Eastern clime. The old Chief of Della Ripa, than whom one more fierce and brave never existed in all Italy, had that morning given his daughter's hand to Giovanni of Visinara; and as she neared the castle that was henceforth to be her home, every point from which a view of the procession could be obtained was seized upon.

"By my patron saint, but it is a goodly sight!" exclaimed one of a group of maidens, gathered at a window beneath which the bridal cavalcade was prancing. "Only look at Master Pietro, the seneschal."

"And at the steel points of the halberds,—how they shine in the crimson of the setting sun."

"Nay, rather look at these lovely dames that follow—the Lady Adelaide's tire-women. By the sacred relics! if her beauty exceed that of her maidens, it must be rare to look upon. See the gold and purple of their palfreys' horsecloths waving in the air."

"Hist! hist! it is the Count of Visinara in his emblazoned carriage! How haughtily he sits; but the Visinara is a haughty race. And—yes—see—by his side—oh, how lovely! Signora Montani, look! That face might win a kingdom."

Gina Montani, who stood in the corner of the lattice, shielded from

view by its massive frame, may possibly have heard, but she answered not.

"Say what you will of his pride, he is the handsomest man that ever lived," exclaimed a damsel, enthusiastically. "Look at him now—he sits bareheaded, his plumed cap resting on his knee—where will you find a face and form like that?"

"What is *she* like?" interrupted an old duenna, snappishly, who, standing behind, could not as yet obtain a view of the coveted sight; "we know enough of his looks, let us hear something of hers. But you girls are ever the same: if a troop of sister angels came down from heaven, and a graceless cavalier appeared at the other side, you would turn your backs to the angels and your eyes upon him. Is she as handsome as the young Lady Beatrice, the count's sister, who married away a year agone?"

"Oh, mother, she is not like her. Beatrice of Visinara had a warm countenance, with eyes black as the darkest night, and brilliant as a diamond aigrette."

"And are the wife's not black?" screamed out the duenna. "They ought to be: her blood is pure Italian."

"They are blue as heaven's sky, and her face is dazzling to behold from its extreme fairness, and her golden hair droops in curls almost to her waist—it is a band of diamonds, you observe, that confines it from the temples. But you can see her now, mother: remember you one half so lovely?"

"Dio mio!" uttered the woman, startled at the beautiful vision that now came within her sight; "the Lord of Visinara has not sacrificed his liberty for nothing."

"Mark you her rich white dress, mother, with its corsage of diamonds, and the sleeves looped up to the elbow with lace and jewels? And over it, nearly hiding her fair neck, is a mantle of blue velvet, clasped by a diamond star. And see, she is taking her glove off, and her hand is raised to her cheek—small and delicate it is too, as befitteth her rank and beauty. And—look!—he lays his own upon it as she drops it, but she would draw it from him to replace the glove. Now he bends to speak to her, and she steals a glance at him with her blushing cheeks and her eyes full of love. And now he is bowing to the people—hark how they shout, 'Long life to the Lady Adelaide—long life and happiness to the Count and Countess of Visinara!'"

"She is very beautiful, Bianca; but——"

"Ay, what? You are a reader of countenances, madra mia; what see you there?"

"That she is proud and self-willed. And woe be to any who may hereafter look upon her handsome husband with an eye of favour, for she loves him."

"Can there be a doubt of that?" echoed Bianca: "has she no

married him? And look at his attractions: see this goodly lot of cavaliers speeding on to join his banquet; can any there compare with him?"

Chi é stracco di bonaccie, si mariti," answered the old lady. "Have you, Bianca, yet to learn that the comeliest mates oftentimes bring anything but love to the altar?"

Bianca made a grimace, as if she doubted. "It would have come sure enough, then," she said, aloud; "for none could be brought into daily contact with one so attractive and not learn to love him."

"And who should this be in a saintly habit, following the bridal equipage on his mule? Surely the spiritual director of the Lady Adelaide—the Father Anselmo it must be, that we have heard speak of. A faithful man, but stern, it is told; and so his countenance would betray. Bend your heads in reverence, my children: the holy man is bestowing his blessings."

"How savage I should be were I the Lady Beatrice, not to be able to come to the wedding," broke in the giddy Bianca. "She reckoned fully upon it, they say, and had caused her dress to be prepared—one to rival the bride's in splendour."

"She has enough to do with her newly-born infant," mumbled the good duenna. "Gaiety first, care afterwards; a christening usually follows a wedding. Come, girls, there's nothing more to see."

"Nay, mother mine, some of these dames that follow, guests for the banquet, lack not beauty."

"Pish!" uttered a fair young girl, who had hitherto been silent; "it would be waste of time to look at their faces after the Lady Adelaide's."

"Who is that going away? The Signora 'Montani? Why, it has not all passed, signora. She is gone, I declare! What a curious girl she seems, that."

"Do you know what they say?" cried little Lisa, Bianca's cousin.

"What do they say?"

"That her mother is a descendant of those dreadful people over the sea, who have no religion, the heretics."

The pious duenna boxed her niece's ears.

"You sinful little monkey, to utter such heresy!" she cried, when anger allowed her to speak.

"They do say so!" sobbed the young lady, dancing about with the passion she dared not otherwise vent. "And people *do* say," she continued, out of bravado, and smarting under the pain, "that they are heretics themselves: or else why do they never come to mass?"

"The old Signora Montani is nearly bedridden: how could she get to mass?" laughed Bianca.

"Don't answer her, Bianca. If she says such a thing here again—if she insinuates that the Signora Gina, knowing herself to be in such

league with the Evil One, would dare to put her head inside a faithful house such as this, I will cause her to do public penance—the wicked little calumniator!" concluded the good duenna, adding a few finishing strokes upon Lisa's ear.

IV.

Long lasted the bridal banquet, and merrily it sped. Ere its conclusion, and when the hours were drawing towards midnight, the young Lady Adelaide, attended by her maidens, was conducted to her dressing chamber, according to the custom of the times and of the country.

She sat down in front of a large mirror whilst they disrobed her. They took the circlet of diamonds from her head, the jewels from her neck and arms, and then removed the elegant bridal dress ; and there she sat, in a dressing-robe of cambric and lace, while they brushed out and braided her beautiful hair.

As they were thus engaged, the lady's eyes ran round and round the costly chamber. The furniture and appurtenances were of the most recherché description: it had been the count's pleasure so to decorate it for his bride. One article in particular attracted her admiration. It was a small, but costly cabinet of malachite marble, exquisitely mounted in silver, and had been a present to the count from a Russian despot. In the inner part was a fixed mirror, encircled by a large frame of silver, and on the projecting slab stood open essence-bottles of pure crystal in silver frames, emitting various perfumes. As she continued to look at this novelty—the marble called malachite was even more rare and costly in those days than it is in ours—she perceived lying by the side of the scent-bottles, a piece of folded paper. Wondering what it could be, she desired one of the ladies to bring it to her. It proved to be a sealed letter, and was addressed to herself.

The conscious blush of love rose to her cheeks, for she deemed it was some communication or present from her husband. She opened it, and the contents instantly caught her eye, in the soft, pure light which the lamps shed over the apartment:

"To the Lady Adelaide, Countess of Visinara.

"You fancy yourself the beloved of Giovanni, Count of Visinara, but retire not to your rest this night, lady, in any such vain imagining. The heart of the count has long been given to another, and you know, by your love for him, that such passion—that of first love—can never change its object. Had he met you in earlier life, it might have been otherwise. He marries you, for your lineage is a high one, and she, in the world's eye and in that of his own haughty race, was no fit mate for him."

The bridegroom was still at the banquet, for some of his guests drank deeply, when a hasty summons came to him. Quitting the hall, he found standing outside two of his bride's attendants.

"Sir Count, the Lady Adelaide——"

"Has retired?" he observed, finding they hesitated, yet feeling somewhat surprised at so speedy a summons.

"Nay, signor, not retired, but——"

"But what? Speak out."

"We were disrobing the Lady Adelaide, Sir Count, when she saw in the chamber a note addressed to her. And—and—she read it, and fainted, in spite of the essence we poured on her hands and brow."

"A note!—fainted!" ejaculated the count.

"It was an insulting letter, signor; for Irene, the youngest of the Lady Adelaide's attendants, read the first line or two of it aloud, before we could prevent her, it having fallen, open, to the floor. Our lady is yet insensible, and the Signora Lucrezia desires us to acquaint you, my lord."

Without another word he turned from them, and, passing through the various corridors, entered the dressing-chamber. The Lady Adelaide was still motionless, but a faint colouring had begun to appear in her face.

"What is this, signora?" demanded the count of the chief attendant, Lucrezia.

"It must be owing to this letter, Sir Count, which was waiting for her on the cabinet," was the lady's reply, holding out the open note. "The Lady Adelaide fainted while she was perusing it."

"Fold it up," interrupted the count, "and replace it there." And Lucrezia did as she was bid.

"You may now go," said Giovanni to the attendants, advancing to support his bride himself, as she revived. "When the countess has need of you, you shall be summoned."

"You have read that letter?" were the first connected words of the Lady Adelaide.

"Nay, my love, surely not without your permission. Will you that I read it?"

She motioned in the affirmative.

A guilty, glowing colour came over his face as he read. From whom did it come? That it alluded to Gina Montani there was no doubt. He felt sure, or thought he did, that Gina had no act or part in so dishonourable a trick. Yet what may not be expected from a jealous woman? Now came his trial.

"Was it not enough to make me ill?" demanded Adelaide. And he stammered something by way of answer.

"Giovanni," she exclaimed, passionately, "deceive me not. Tell me what I have to fear: how much of your love is left for me—if any."

He tried to soothe her. He told her an enemy must have done this: and he mentioned Gina Montani, though not by name. He said that he had sometimes visited her house, but not to love, and that the letter must allude to this.

"You *say* you did not love her!" she cried, resentment in her tone, as she listened to the tale.

For a single second he hesitated. But for her own sake he felt it to be his duty to lull her suspicions. The flush of shame rose to his brow for he deemed a falsehood dishonourable.

"In truth I did not. My love is yours, Adelaide."

"Why did you visit her?"

"I can hardly tell you. I hardly know myself; want of thought—or of occupation probably."

"You surely did not wrong her?" was the next whispered question as she turned her face from him.

"Wrong *her!* Did you know her, you could not admit the possibility of the idea," he answered, resentment in his tone now. "She is of gentle birth, has been carefully reared, and is as innocent as you are."

"Who is she?—what is her name?"

"Adelaide, let us forget the subject. I have told you I loved her not: and I should not have mentioned this at all, but that I can think of nothing else to which that diabolical letter can have alluded. Believe me, my own wife"—and he drew her to him as he spoke—"that I have not done you so great an injury as to marry where I could not love."

"Oh," she exclaimed, wringing her hands, "that this cruel news had not been given me! Giovanni," she continued, vehemently, and half sinking on her knees before him, "deceive me not. If there be aught of truth in this accusation, let me depart. I am your wife but in name; a slight ceremony only has passed between us, and we both know how readily, with such influence as ours, the Church at Rome would dissolve that. Suffer me to depart ere I shall be indeed your wife."

"Adelaide," he replied, mournfully, as he held her, "I thought you loved me."

"I do—I do. None can know how passionately. My very life is bound up in yours; but it is because I so love you, that I could not brook a rival."

"You have no rival, Adelaide. You never shall have one."

"I mean not a rival in the vulgar acceptation of the term," she replied, a shade of haughtiness mingling with her tone—"but one in your heart—your mind. This I could not bear."

"Adelaide, hear me. Some enemy, wishing to do me a foul injury, has thrust himself between us: but, rely on it, they are but false cowards who stab in the dark. I have sought you these many months; I have striven to gain your love; I have now made you mine. Talk not of separation, Adelaide."

She burst into a passionate fit of weeping.

"Adelaide," he whispered, as he fondly clasped her to his heart,

"believe that I love you; believe that you have no rival, and that I will give you none. I have made you my wife—the wife of my bosom: you are, and ever shall be, my only love."

Sweet words! And the Lady Adelaide suffered her disturbed mind to yield to them, resolutely thrusting away the dreadful thought that the heart of her attractive husband could ever have been given to another.

V.

Months elapsed, and the Lady Adelaide was the happiest of the happy, although now and again the remembrance of that anonymous letter would flit into her mind like a dream. That most rare felicity was indeed hers, of passionately idolising one from whom she need never be separated by night or by day. But how was it with him? Love is almost the only passion which cannot be called forth or turned aside at will, and though the Count di Visinara treated his wife, and ever would so treat her, with the most anxious affection, though he strove with all his might and main to love her, his rebellious heart was still true to Gina Montani.

But now the count had to leave home on business; to remain away fifteen days. In those earlier times women could not accompany their lords everywhere, as they may in these; and when Giovanni rode away from his castle gates, the Lady Adelaide sank in solitude upon the arm of one of her costly sofas, all rich with brocaded velvet; and though not a tear dimmed her eye, or a line of pain marked her forehead, to tell of suppressed feelings, it seemed to her that her heart was breaking.

It was on the morrow. News was brought to the countess that one craved admission to her—a maiden, young and beautiful, the servitor said; and the Lady Adelaide ordered her to be admitted.

Young and beautiful indeed, and so she looked, as, with downcast eyes, the visitor was ushered in. *You* know her, reader, though the Lady Adelaide did not. She began to stammer out an incoherent explanation: that news had reached her of the retirement of one of the Lady Adelaide's attendants, and of her wish to fill the vacant place.

"What is your name?" inquired the countess, already taken, as the young are apt to be, with the prepossessing manners and appearance of her visitor.

"Signora, it is Gina Montani."

"And in whose household have you resided?"

A deep shade rose to Gina's face. "Madam, as yet only in my mother's. But she is dead and I am alone in the world. I have heard much of the Countess of Visinara's gentleness and worth, and I should wish to serve her."

Some further conversation, a few preliminary arrangements, and Gina Montani was installed at the castle as one of the countess's maids

in waiting. A somewhat contradistinctive term, be it understood, to a *waiting-maid;* these attendants of high-born gentlewomen being then made, in a great degree, their companions. Gina speedily rose in favour. Her manners were gentle and unassuming; and there was ever a sadness about her which, coupled with her great beauty, rendered her eminently interesting.

VI.

The Lady Adelaide stood at the eastern window of the purple-room—so called from its magnificent hangings—watching eagerly for the appearance of her husband, it being the day and hour of his expected return. So had she stood since the morning. Ah! what pleasure is there in this world like that of watching for a beloved one? At the opposite end of the apartment sat her ladies, engaged upon some fancy work, then in vogue.

"Come hither, Lucrezia," said the lady at length. "Discern you yon groups of trees in the distance, through which glimpses of the highway may be distinguished? See you aught?"

"Nothing but the road, my lady. And yet, now I look attentively, there seems to be a movement, as of a body of horsemen. It should be the count, madam, and his followers."

"I think it is, Lucrezia," said the Lady Adelaide, calmly, not suffering her emotion to appear in the presence of her maidens, for that haughty girl brooked not that others should read her deep love for Giovanni. "You may return to your embroidery."

The Count di Visinara rode at a sharp trot towards his home, followed by his retainers. When near enough to see his wife at the window, he quickened the pace to a gallop, after taking off his plumed cap, and waving his hand towards her in the distance. She pressed her heart to still its throbbing, as she heard him rattle over the drawbridge.

She was turning to leave the apartment to welcome him, when he entered, so great haste had he made. Without observing that she was not alone, he threw his arms round her, fondly drew aside her fair golden curls, and kissed her repeatedly. She drew back, the glowing crimson overspreading her face; and then the count turned and saw they were not alone. At the extreme end of the apartment, out of hearing, but within sight, were the damsels seated over their embroidery.

"Gina," murmured one of the girls, still pursuing her work, "what has made you turn so pale? You are as white as Juliette's dress."

"Is the Signora Montani ill?" demanded Lucrezia, sharply; for she liked not Gina.

"A sudden pain—a spasm in my side," gasped poor Gina. "It is over now."

"Is he not an attractive man?" whispered another of the ladies in Gina's ear.

"He?"

"The Count di Visinara. I suppose you never saw him before They are well matched for beauty, he and the Lady Adelaide."

"Pray attend to your work, and let this gossiping cease," exclaimed Lucrezia, angrily.

Giovanni and his wife remained at the window, their backs towards the damsels. She suffered her hand to remain in his—they could not see *that*—and conversed with him in a confidential tone. Then she began chattering to him of her new attendant, saying how lovely she was, how pleasing and sad and gentle. In the midst of this, a servant announced the mid-day meal.

"Now you shall see my favourite," she exclaimed, as he took her hand to conduct her to the banquet-hall. "I will stop as I pass them, to look at their work, and you shall tell me if you do not think her very beautiful."

"Scarcely, Adelaide, when beside you."

"She is about my age," ran on Adelaide, whose spirits were raised to exuberance. But it had never entered the mind of that haughty lady to imagine the possibility of the Lord of Visinara, *her husband*, looking upon any attendant of hers with real admiration. Or she might not have discussed their personal merits.

"How goes on the work, Lucrezia?" demanded the Lady Adelaide, halting close to her attendants.

"Favourably, madam," answered the signora, rising from her seat.

"That is a beautiful part that you are engaged upon, Gina. Bring it forward, that we may exhibit our handiwork to my lord."

Gina Montani, without raising her eyes, and trembling inwardly and outwardly, rose, and advanced with the embroidery. The Signora Lucrezia, detecting her curious agitation, was regarding her, covertly.

"Is it not a handsome pattern?" exclaimed Adelaide, her thoughts now really occupied with the beauty of the work. "And I was so industrious while you were away, Giovanni. I did a good portion of this myself—I did, indeed; all the shadings of the rosebuds are my doing, and those interlaces of silver."

But, raising her pretty face to his, eager for his meed of approbation, Adelaide was startled at its look. It had turned to a frightful pallor.

"Oh, Giovanni, you are ill! My husband, what is it? Giovanni——"

"It is nothing," interrupted the count, leading her hurriedly from the room. "I rode hard, and the sun was hot. A cup of wine will restore me."

But not less awake to this emotion of the count's than she had been to Gina's, was the Signora Lucrezia, and she came to the conclusion

that there was some unaccountable mystery at the bottom of it. Which mystery she forthwith, as a matter of course, determined to do all in her power to solve.

VII.

Days passed. The count had not yet seen Gina alone, though he had sought for the opportunity; but one morning when he entered the embroidery-room—so-called—Gina sat there alone, sorting silks. He did not observe her at first, and, being in search of his wife, called to her.

"Adelaide?"

"The Lady Adelaide is not here, signor," was Gina's reply, as she rose from her seat.

"Gina," he said, advancing cautiously, and speaking in an undertone, "what in the name of all that was foolish brought you here—an inmate of my house—the attendant of the Lady Adelaide?"

"You shall hear the truth," she gasped, leaning against the wall for support. "I have lived all these months in my dreary home, unseeing you, uncared for, knowing only that you were happy with another. Giovanni, can you picture what I endured? My mother died—you may have heard of it—and her relations sent to ask me to go into their distant country, and would have comforted me; but I would not go. I remained on here, alone, to be near you. Oh, it was long, long! I struggled much with my unhappy passion. My very soul was wearing away with despair. I would see you pass sometimes at a distance with your retainers—and that was heaven to me. Then came a thought into my mind; I wrestled with it, and would have driven it away—but there it was, ever haunting me. It may be that my better angel sent it there; it may be that the Evil One, who is ever tempting us for ill, urged it on."

"What mean you?" he inquired.

"It suggested," she continued, in a low voice, "that if but to see you at a distance and at rare intervals, could almost compensate for my life of misery, what bliss would be mine were I living under the roof of your own home, liable to see you perhaps even once a day. Hence you find me numbered amongst your wife's waiting-maids. And blame me not, Giovanni," she hastily concluded, seeing him about to interrupt her; "you are the cause of all, for you sought and gained my love. And such love! I think none can have ever known such. It is the one task of my life to suppress it. The fiercest jealousy of the Lady Adelaide torments my heart—and yet I must suppress it. Giovanni, you have brought this anguish upon me; so blame me not."

"It is a dangerous proceeding, Gina. I was becoming reconciled to our separation; but now—it will be dangerous for both of us."

"Ay," she answered, bitterly, "you had all. Friends, revelry, a wife of rare beauty, the chase, the bustle of an immense household—in

short, what had you not to aid your mental struggles? I but my home of solitude, and the jealous pictures, self, but ever inflicted, of your happiness with the Lady Adelaide."

"I still love you, Gina," he repeated. "But you know that I can show it not."

"Do I ask you to show it?—think you I would permit you to show it?" she reiterated quickly. "No, no; I did not come here to sow discord in your household. Suffer me to live on unnoticed, as of these last few days, but, oh! drive me not away from you."

"Gina, Gina, this will never do. I mistrust my own powers of endurance; ay, and of concealment."

"You can think of me but as the waiting-maid of your lady," she interrupted, in a tone of bitterness. "In time you will solely regard me as such."

"There would be another obstacle," he added, his voice sinking to a whisper. "How could you live in my household, and not conform to the usages of our faith? Believe me, Gina, it is a plan that will never answer."

She burst into tears: beseeching him not to drive her away. And to the tears he, against his better judgment, yielded.

"But you understand," he said, somewhat sternly, "that from this moment all confidence ceases between us: we must be to each other as strangers."

"Even so," she acquiesced. "Yet if you deem that my enduring affection deserves requital, give me at times a look as of old; a smile, unperceived by others, but acknowledged by, and too dear to, my own heart. I ask no more than that. It will be a token that you have not driven away all remembrance of our once youthful love, though it is at an end for ever."

He smiled sadly now in answer, and they parted by different doors. He to seek his wife, she the solitude of her chamber. And no sooner had the sound of their footsteps died away in the gallery, than out of a closet in the room stepped the Signora Lucrezia, her eyes and mouth wide open, and her hair standing on end.

"May all the saints reject me if ever I met with such a plot as this!" she ejaculated. "I knew there was something underhand about her, but who would have suspected this! So the innocent-faced madam is nothing but a she-wolf in sheep's petticoats! That dreadful letter is explained now. May I die unabsolved if ever I met with the like of this! It is her fault, the wicked one; not his. She must have bewitched him with her false face. If my baby mistress did but know it! *Her* rival—and she showering down favours on her! A pretty life the count will lead between the two, dear good man!—and neither of them fit to tie his shoes. I'll keep my eyes and ears open: there will be an explosion some day, or my name is not Lucrezia Andrini."

PART THE SECOND.

I.

THERE was much bustle and commotion in the Castle of Visinara. Servitors ran hither and thither, the tire-maidens stood in groups to gossip with each other, messengers were despatched in various directions, and skilful leeches and experienced nurses were brought in. Then came a long silence. Voices were hushed and footsteps muffled; the apartments of the countess were darkened, and naught was heard save the issued whisper, or the stealthy tread of the sick-chamber. The Lady Adelaide was ill.

Hours elapsed—hours of intolerable suspense to the Lord of Visinara; and then were heard deep, heartfelt congratulations; but they were spoken in a whisper, for the lady was still in danger, and had suffered almost unto death. There was born an heir to Visinara.

And as Giovanni, Count of Visinara, bent over his child, and embraced its young mother, he felt repaid for all he had suffered in voluntarily severing himself from Gina Montani. From that time he forgot her; or something very like it. And for this he could not be condemned, for it lay in the line of honour and of duty. Yet it was another proof, if one were wanting, of the fickle nature of man's love. It has been well compared to words written on the sands.

Many weeks elapsed ere the Lady Adelaide was allowed to join in the gaieties and festal meetings of the land. A two days' fête, given at the Capella Palace, was the signal for her reappearance in the world. It was to be of great magnificence, and she consented to attend it on the morning of the second day.

She placed herself in front of the large mirror in her dressing-chamber whilst she was prepared for the visit, the same mirror before which she had sat on the evening of her wedding-day. The Signora Lucrezia and Gina were alone present. The former was arranging her fair silken tresses, whilst Gina handed the signora the articles required for the task. The count entered, dressed.

"Giovanni," exclaimed Adelaide, "Lucrezia thinks that I should wear something in my hair—a wreath, or my diamond coronet; but I feel tired already, and wish the dressing was over. Need I be teased with ornaments?"

"My sweet wife, wear what you best like. *You* need no superficial adorning."

"You hear, Lucrezia: make haste and finish. You may put aside the diamond casket, Gina. Oh, there's my darling!" continued the countess, hearing the baby pass the door with its nurse. "Call him in."

The count himself opened the door, and took his infant.

"The precious, precious child!" exclaimed Adelaide, bending over the infant, which he placed on her knees. "Giovanni," she added,

looking up eagerly to her husband's face, "do you think there ever was so lovely a babe sent on earth?"

He smiled at her earnestness—men are never so rapturously blind in the worship of their first-born as women. But he stooped down, and fondly pressed his lips upon her forehead, while he played with the little hand of the infant. She yielded to the temptation of suffering her face to rest for a moment close to his.

"But it grows late," resumed the young mother. "Take the baby to its nurse, Lucrezia;" and she kissed it fifty times as she resigned it.

The count had chanced to draw behind his wife: and there stood Gina. He was struck by the pallid sorrow of her countenance. Ill-fated Gina! and he had been so absorbed these weeks in his new happiness!

A rush of pity, mingled perhaps with self-reproach, penetrated his heart. In that moment he remembered her last words at the interview in the embroidery-room, and gave her a look—the look she had coveted.

It was not to be mistaken. Love—love, pure and tender—gleamed from his eyes; and Gina answered him with a smile which told her thanks. Had anyone been looking on, they could scarcely fail to become aware of their mutual love, or of a secret understanding between them.

And one was looking on. In the large glass before her the Lady Adelaide had distinctly seen the reflection of all that took place Her countenance became white as death, and her anger was terrible.

"You may retire for the present," she said, in a calm, subdued tone, to the startled Gina, upon whose mind flashed somewhat of the truth. "Tell the Signora Lucrezia not to return until I call for her."

To describe the scene that ensued would be difficult. The shock to the young wife's feelings had been very great. That her husband was faithless to her, not only in deed but in heart, she never doubted. It was in vain he endeavoured to explain all; she listened to him not. To her, he seemed to be uttering falsehoods, which but increased his treachery. Gina had once spoken of her fierce jealousy: but what was hers compared with the Lady Adelaide's? In the midst of her explosion of passion, Lucrezia, who had misunderstood her lady's prohibitory message, entered, and stood aghast: until admonished from the room again by a haughty wave of the count's hand.

He departed for the Capella fête alone. His wife refused to go.

"Mercy! mercy!" she moaned in anguish, as she remained alone in her apartments. "To be thus requited by Giovanni—whom I so loved! My husband—my own husband! Is it possible that a man can be guilty of treachery so deep? Would that I had died ere I knew his faithlessness. To introduce her into our home, into my very presence, an attendant on my person. That I should be so degraded!

Sure a wife, young and beautiful, was never treated as I have been. Lowered in the eyes of my own servants; insulted by him who ought to have guarded me from insult; laughed at—ridiculed by *her!* Oh! terrible! terrible!"

The Lady Adelaide had taken up a wrong and exaggerated view of the case. Rising as she spoke the last words, she unlocked the bright green cabinet, that of malachite marble already spoken of, and took from thence a small box of silver gilt. Touching the secret spring of this, she drew forth a letter, opened, and read it:

"'To the Lady Adelaide, Countess of Visinara.

"'You fancy yourself the beloved of Giovanni, Count of Visinara; but retire not to your rest this night, lady, in any such vain imagining. The heart of the count has long been given to another; and you know, by your love for him, that such passion—that of first love—can never change its object. Had he met you in earlier life, it might have been otherwise. He marries you, for your lineage is a high one, and she, in the world's eye and in that of his own haughty race, was no fit mate for him.'

"Ay," she shuddered, "it is explained now. So, Gina Montani was this beloved one. I am his by sufferance—she, by love. Holy Mother, have mercy on my brain! I *know* they love—I see it all too plainly. And I could believe his deceitful explanation, and trust him. I *told* him I believed it on our wedding-night. *He did not know why he went to her house; habit, he supposed, or want of occupation.* Oh, shame on his false words! Shame on my own credulity!"

None of us can forget the stanzas in Collins's "Ode to the Passions:"—

> "Thy numbers, Jealousy, to nought were fixed,
> Sad proof of thy distressful state:
> Of differing themes the veering song was mixed,
> And now it courted love—now, raving, called on hate."

And calling, indeed, upon hate, as she strode her chamber in a frenzy near akin to madness, was the Lady Adelaide, when her attendant, Lucrezia, entered.

"My dear lady," she exclaimed, bursting into tears, false as those of a crocodile, "my dear, dear young lady, I cannot know that you are thus suffering, and keep away from your presence. Pardon me for intruding upon you against orders."

The Lady Adelaide smoothed her brow, and the lines of her face resumed their haughtiness, as she imperiously motioned Lucrezia to quit the room. The heart most awake to the miseries of life wears to the world the coldest surface; and it was not in the Lady Adelaide's nature to betray aught of her emotions to any living being; save, perhaps, to her husband.

"Nay, my lady, suffer me to remain yet a moment. At least, while I disclose what I know of that viper."

The Lady Adelaide started; but she suppressed all excitement, and set herself to listen. Lucrezia began her tale—an exaggerated account of the interview she had been a witness to between the Lord of Visinara and Gina Montani. The countess listened to its conclusion, and a low moan escaped her.

"What think you now, madam, she deserves?"

"*To die!*" burst from the pale lips of the unhappy lady.

"To die," acquiesced Lucrezia, calmly. "No other punishment would meet her guilt; and no other, that I am aware of, could be devised to bring you security for the future."

"Oh! tempt me not," cried the lady, wringing her hands. "I spoke hastily."

"And wisely, madam," put in Lucrezia. "Give but the orders."

"How can I?" demanded the Lady Adelaide, once more pacing the room, in her anguish; "how could I ever rest afterwards, with so great a guilt upon my soul?"

"It will be no guilt, lady."

"Lucrezia!"

"I have made it my business to inquire much about this girl—to ascertain her history. I thought it my duty to do so, and very soon I should have laid the whole matter before you."

"Well?"

"You may destroy her, madam, as you would destroy that little bird there in its golden cage, without sin and without compunction."

"Oh, Lucrezia, Lucrezia! once more I say unto thee, tempt me not. Wicked and artful though she is, she is still one of God's creatures."

"Scarcely, my lady," answered the bigoted woman, with a gesture which spoke of deep scorn for the culprit. "I have cause to believe—good cause," she repeated, lowering her voice, and looking round, as if she feared the very walls might hear the fearful words she was about to utter, "that she is one of those lost creatures who are enemies to our faith and to Heaven: a descendant of the Saxons, and an apostate."

"*What* say you?" gasped the Lady Adelaide.

"That we have been harbouring a heretic, madam," continued Lucrezia, her passion rising. "No wonder that evil has fallen upon this house."

"Go to the cell of Father Anselmo," shivered the Lady Adelaide, "and pray his holiness to step hither. This doubt shall at once be set at rest."

II.

Gina Montani, her head aching with suspense and anxiety, was shut up alone in her chamber, when she received a summons to attend her

mistress. Obeying at once, she found the confessor, Father Anselmo, sitting there, by the side of the countess. He cast his eyes steadfastly upon Gina, as if examining her features.

"Never, my daughter, never!" he said, at length, turning to the countess. "I can take upon myself to assert that this damsel of thine has never once appeared before me to be shriven."

"Examine her," was the reply of the lady.

"Daughter," said the priest, turning to Gina, "for so I would fain call thee, what faith is it that thou professest?"

Gina raised her hand to her burning temples. She saw that all was discovered. But when she removed it, the perplexity in her face had cleared away, and her resolution was taken.

"The truth, the truth," she murmured; "for good, or for ill, I will tell it now. I am not a Roman Catholic," she answered timidly.

The Lady Adelaide crossed herself, as if for protection from the words: she had been reared in all the bigotry and superstition of the times. Gina grasped the arm of the chair against which she was standing. She was endeavouring to steel her heart to bravery; but in those days, and in that country, such a scene was a terrible ordeal.

"Dost thou not worship the One True God?" asked the priest, looking with compassion upon the sad and unhappy girl.

"I worship the One True God," replied Gina, solemnly, joining her hands in a reverent attitude. "But we—we—do not recognise the Pope."

"And yet, child, to him it is given to mediate between man and heaven? Hast thou yet to learn," continued the priest, troubled and aghast, "that in the next world there is a place of torture kept for unbelievers—a gulf of burning flames, to be extinguished never?"

"We are told there is such a place," she answered, struggling with her tears, for the interview was becoming too painful. "May the infinite love and mercy of God keep both you and me from it!"

"Thou art bold," he cried. "Whence hast thou imbibed these doctrines?"

"My mother wedded with an Italian," answered Gina; "but she was born on the free soil of England, and reared in its Reformed Faith."

"And this mother of thine, child: where may she be?"

"She is dead," gasped Gina, bursting into tears. "I have no guide now but my Bible."

Now, it is well known that in those ages in Italy the Bible was regarded as a very unfit book to be read indiscriminately by the people. The priest shook his head. To the Lady Adelaide and to Lucrezia, Gina's confessions brought absolute horror.

"She is hopeless," gasped the former.

"I fear me so, my daughter. At least, at present," added the priest;

some benevolent idea crossing his mind that perhaps he might by his teachings redeem her. "Fetch me thy Bible, child," he said to Gina. "I will take care of it for a time."

She took it out of a pocket underneath her gown. An English Bible. The priest could not read it.

"Dost thou speak this language, then, daughter?"

"It is familiar to me as my own," replied Gina.

"Oh, father, father!" cried the Lady Adelaide, sinking at his feet, after Gina had been despatched to her chamber, and giving vent involuntarily to sobs of agony, "she has dared to come between me and my husband—he has known her long, it seems. If she should taint him with this dreadful heresy?"

Father Anselmo did not like the suggestion. Giovanni of Visinara was a true servant of his church and a liberal benefactor. In his perplexity, he made for the moment no rejoinder.

"It will not be a crime to remove her, father," faltered the Lady Adelaide.

"*Crime!*" repeated the priest. "Canst thou connect the word with any such procedure? It is on the contrary, a measure needful to be taken."

But the probability is that the speaker never supposed that any measure, more stringent than that of removing her from the castle, was contemplated.

"To remove her in *any way*," persisted the lady, in a whisper. "Yet the world might call it by—by an ugly name."

"Certainly, in any way," assented the father. "By force, if necessary."

"Thou wilt then grant me absolution beforehand, holy father," implored the Lady Adelaide, the tears streaming from her eyes.

"For all that thou canst do, my child," he smiled. "Thou hast not been used to these troublous duties; thy life has been one of peace and sunshine."

"Oh true, true! I have been too happy. My waiting woman, Lucrezia, says she has a plan, holy father, to—to—to effect it, by which all scandal may be avoided. She waits only for my orders."

"Thou canst give them, my daughter."

And the Lady Adelaide, believing that she had received sanction for the worst, for so terrible a deed that she had not dared to allude to it in words—and in that reticence may have lain the fatal misapprehension—summoned Lucrezia to her when the priest had departed.

III.

The castle was wrapped in silence, it being past the hour at which the household retired to repose. Gina Montani was in her night-dress, though as yet she had not touched her hair, which remained in long

curls, as she had worn it in the day. Suspense and agitation caused her movements to be slow, to linger; and she sat at her dressing-table in a musing attitude, her head resting on her hand, wondering what would be the ending to all that the day had brought forth. She had dismissed her attendant an hour ago.

With a deep sigh she rose to continue her preparations for rest, when the door softly opened, and the Signora Lucrezia appeared.

"You need not prepare yourself for bed," observed Lucrezia, in a low, distinct whisper; "another sort of bed is preparing for you."

"What do you mean?" demanded the startled girl.

"That you are this night to die."

Gina shrieked.

"I may tell you," interrupted the lady, "that screams and resistance will be wholly useless. Your doom is irrevocable, therefore it may save you trouble to be silent."

"You are speaking falsely to me. I have done nothing to deserve death."

"Equivocation will be alike unavailing," repeated Lucrezia. "And if you ask what you have done—you have dared to step with your ill-placed passion between my lord and the Lady Adelaide: you have brought discredit upon the faith of this house and of the land."

"I have disturbed no one's faith," returned Gina. "I wish to disturb none. It is true that I love Giovanni, Count di Visinara, but I loved him long ere he saw the Lady Adelaide."

"What!" cried the signora, her brow darkening, "do you dare to avow your shame to my face?"

"It is no shame," answered Gina, sadly; "there is nothing of guilt in such a love as mine."

"Follow me," repeated Lucrezia. "You have no time to waste in lamentations."

"By whose orders do I die?" demanded the indignant girl. "Not by *his;* and no one else has a right to condemn me."

Lucrezia expected this, and was prepared. Alas, that the Lord of Visinara should that day have inadvertently left his signet-ring behind him!

"Do you know this ring?" demanded Lucrezia, holding out the jewel.

"Too well. It is the Count of Visinara's."

"You may then know who has condemned you."

"But the count is at the Capella Palace. He is not yet back from the fêtes."

"Not back!" returned Lucrezia, scornfully. "Heard you not the clatter of the men? Some of them had imbibed largely of the Capella wine, I trow. I bring this ring from him I say: a proof that he has condemned you."

"Oh, Giovanni!" wailed Gina, as she sank prostrate on the floor in her anguish, and no longer doubting, "this from you!" All idea of resistance vanished with the thought that it was him she so loved who doomed her to destruction. "How long is it since he returned?"

"I came not to waste the moments in idle words," said Lucrezia, brazening out her falsehoods. "It is sufficient for you to know that he *has* returned, and has given the orders that you seem inclined to resist."

"Implore him to come to me for one moment, for a last farewell."

"I may not ask it. He is with the Lady Adelaide."

"First, my happiness, then, my life; both sacrificed to appease the Lady Adelaide! Oh, Giovanni! false, but dear Giovanni——"

"I have no orders to call those who will use violence," interrupted the signora, "but I must do so if you delay to follow me."

"I am about to dress myself," returned Gina.

"The dress you have on will serve as well as another. And better: for a night-gown bears some resemblance to a shroud"

"One moment for prayer," was the next imploring petition.

"Prayer for you!" broke contemptuously from the signora.

"A single moment for prayer," reiterated the victim. "If I am, indeed, about to meet my Maker, I stand fearfully in need of it; for I have of late worshipped one, more perhaps than I have Him."

"Prayer for you, you heretic!" contemptuously retorted Lucrezia, who, in her own way, was very much of a saint.

Yet still Gina repeated it. "A few moments for prayer—in mercy!"

"Then pray away where you are going," was the impatient answer. 'You will have time enough, and to spare—minutes, and hours. Perhaps days."

The signora evidently took a strange pleasure in urging on the death of Gina Montani. What could be the reason? Women in general are not so frightfully cruel. The truth was, that she herself loved the count. The giddy Bianca had said, when watching the bridal cavalcade, that none could be brought into daily contact with one so attractive as he, and not learn to love him. So had it proved with Lucrezia. Being the favourite attendant of her mistress, she was much with her, and consequently daily and frequently in the company of Giovanni. He had many a gay word and passing jest for her, for he was by nature a gallant, free-spoken man; and this had brought forth its result. Whilst he never gave a thought to her but as of one who waited on his wife, he became to her heart dangerously dear; and her jealousy of Gina, arising first of all from the interview she had witnessed in the embroidery-room, now at least equalled that of the Lady Adelaide.

Pushing the unfortunate girl on before her, Lucrezia silently passed onwards to the more remote parts of the castle. She bore a lantern in her hand which emitted a dim, uncertain light. At length they came

to a passage a little beyond the chapel, far removed from the habited apartments; and in the middle of this were two male forms, busily occupied at work of some description. A lantern, similar to the one Lucrezia carried, was hanging high up against the opposite wall; another stood on the ground. Gina stopped and shivered; but Lucrezia touched her arm, and she walked on.

They were nearing the men, who were habited as monks, probably for disguise, their faces shielded beneath cowls, when the signora halted and pressed her hand upon her brow, as if in thought. Presently she turned to Gina. A second lie was in her mouth; but how was the ill-fated young lady to know it?

"*He* sent you a message," she whispered. "It is his last request to you. Will you receive it?" The unhappy victim looked up eagerly.

"He requests, then, by his love for you—by the remembrance of the happy moments you once spent together, that you neither resist nor scream."

Her heart was too full to speak; but she bowed her head in acquiescence. Lucrezia moved to go on.

"How is my life to be taken? By the dagger? By blows?"

"By neither—by nothing. Not a hair of your head will be touched."

"Ah! I might have guessed. It is by poison."

"It will be taken by *nothing*, I tell you. Why do you not listen to me?"

"You speak in riddles," said Gina, faintly. "But I will bear my fate, whatever it may be."

"And in silence? *He* asks it by your mutual love."

"All, all, for his sake," she answered. "Tell him, that as I have loved, so will I obey him to the last."

Lucrezia walked on, and Gina followed. Whether she understood the manner of her death, might be a question; but, faithful to the imagined wish of her lover, she uttered neither remonstrance nor cry. The clock was upon the stroke of one, when smothered groans of fear and anguish told that her punishment had begun; she understood it then: but no louder sound broke the midnight silence, or carried the appalling deed to the inhabitants of the castle. An hour passed before all was completed; they were long in doing their deed of vengeance; and when it was over, Gina Montani had been removed from the world for ever.

"Madam, she is gone!" was the salutation of Lucrezia, her teeth chattering, and her face the hue of a corpse, when she entered the chamber of her mistress.

The Lady Adelaide had not retired to rest. She was pacing her apartment in unutterable misery. The social conditions of life, its forms and objects, were to her as nothing since her terrible awaking to reality.

Morning had dawned before the return of the Lord of Visinara. The festivities had lasted long. He was fatigued both in body and mind, and, throwing himself upon a couch, sank to sleep. An unusual disturbance and commotion aroused him. The household, struck with amazement and terror, were telling a strange tale: one that, for the moment, drove the life-blood from his heart. The wicked dealing of Gina Montani had been brought to light on the previous day. What these wicked dealings consisted of, no one professed to be able to define, except that Gina had confessed in the presence of the good Father Anselmo that she was in league with the Evil One. And the Evil One had appeared in the night, and had run away with her—a just reward.

In those times, a reputed visit of his Satanic Majesty in propriâ personâ would have been likely to obtain more credence than it could in these; but it would probably be going too far to say that the Lord of Visinara participated in the belief of his horror-stricken household: neither could he trace any positive foundation for the assertion. Gina was gone. To say the least of it, Satan or no Satan, her disappearance was mysterious in the extreme. The maid who waited on her testified that she assisted Gina to undress on the previous night. In proof of which, the garments she had taken off were found in the chamber. The remainder of her clothes were also in their places undisturbed; the only article missing being a night-dress, which the attendant in question said she saw her put on; and her bed had not been slept in. Giovanni spoke to his wife, but she observed a cold, haughty silence, confessing to nothing: it was quite useless to question her. The house was searched and searched, and the neighbourhood, for miles round, scoured; but no trace or tidings of her whatever could be obtained. And yet, strange to say, in passing on that first morning through the remote corridors, the count fancied he heard her voice pronounce his name in a tone of imploring agony. Whether this was but fancy, or whether she had indeed called to him, he never knew, then or later. He searched himself in every nook and corner, but nothing came of it.

After a time, peace was once more restored between him and his wife: but the perfect bliss of her once secure love for him had ceased for ever. As to Lucrezia, she seemed to have acquired a scared kind of look and manner; was more devout at prayers than before, and offered up no end of candles.

And so the time passed on.

IV.

It was the hour of midnight. In the nursery at the castle sat the head nurse, holding on her lap the dying heir of Visinara, now some eight or ten months old. Until about nine days previously, he

had been a fine, healthy child, but from that time a wasting fever had attacked him. It had left him pale and cold; ill unto death.

The Lady Adelaide, her eyes blinded with tears, knelt beside him, gazing on his colourless face. The count himself was gently rubbing his little hands, to try and excite some warmth in them.

"Do you not think he looks a little, a *very* little better?" demanded the lady, anxiously.

The nurse hesitated. She did not think so, but she was unwilling to say what she thought.

"His hands—are they any warmer, Giovanni?"

The count shook his head. The Lady Adelaide pressed her lips upon the infant's damp forehead, and burst into renewed tears.

"You will be ill, Adelaide," said her husband. "This incessant watching is bad for you. Let me persuade you to take an hour's rest."

She motioned in the negative.

"Indeed, madam, but you ought to do so," interposed Lucrezia, who was present. "These many nights you have passed without sleep; and your health so delicate!"

"Lie down—lie down, my love," he interposed, "if only for a short time."

And at length she was induced to comply, the nurse undertaking to let her know if there should be the slightest change in the child. Giovanni passed his arm round his wife to lead her from the chamber, for she was painfully weak; but they had scarcely gone ten steps from the door, when a prolonged, shrill scream, as of one in unutterable terror, reached their ears. They rushed back again.

The nurse sat, her dilating eyes fixed on one corner of the room, her face rigid with horror. It was she who had screamed.

"My child! my child!" groaned the Lady Adelaide.

"Nurse, what in the name of terror is the matter?" exclaimed the count, perceiving no alteration in the infant. "You look as if you had seen a spectre!"

"I have seen one," shuddered the nurse.

"What *have* you been dreaming of?" he returned, angrily.

"As true as that we are all assembled here, my lord," continued the nurse, solemnly, "I saw the spirit of Gina Montani!"

A change came over the Lord of Visinara's countenance, but he spoke not. The Lady Adelaide clung to her husband in fear; while Lucrezia, who had been listening in perplexed arrangement, darted into the midst of the group, and laid hold of the nurse's chair.

"What absurdity!" exclaimed the count, recovering himself. "How could such an idea enter your head?"

"Were it the last word I had to speak, my lord," continued the woman, "and to my dying day, I will maintain what I assert. I saw

Gina Montani. She stood in a night-dress, *there*, where the lamp casts its shade."

"Nonsense," repeated the count, abstractedly. But Lucrezia was white, and shook convulsively.

At this moment, a wild, frantic sob burst from the Lady Adelaide. The child was dead!

V.

Many months again slipped by, with little to distinguish them save the decreasing strength of the Lady Adelaide. She had been wasting slowly away ever since the shock given to her heart at discovering her husband's love for Gina Montani. She loved him passionately, and she *knew* her love must be unrequited; for the affections once be stowed, as his had been, can never be recalled and given to another. The illness of the mind wrought upon the body. She became worse and worse; and after the birth of a second child, it was evident that she was sinking rapidly.

She lay upon the stately bed in her magnificent chamber, about which were scattered many articles consecrated to her girlhood, or to her happy bridal, and, as such, precious. Seated by the bedside was her husband, one of his hands clasping hers. In the other hand he held a cambric handkerchief, with which he occasionally wiped her languid brow.

"Bear with me a little longer, my husband. But a short time."

"Bear with you, Adelaide!" he repeated. "Would to Heaven you might he spared to me!"

"It is impossible," she sighed, pressing his hand upon her wasted bosom.

"Adelaide"—he hesitated, after a while—"I would ask you a question. A question which, if you can, I entreat that you will answer."

She looked at him inquiringly, and he resumed, in a low voice: "What became of Gina Montani?"

Even amidst the pallid hue of death, a hectic colour flushed her cheeks at the words. She gasped with agitation before she could speak.

"Bring not up that subject now; the only one that came between us to disturb our peace; the one to which I am indebted for my death. I am lying dying before you, Giovanni, and you can think but of her."

"My love, why will you so misunderstand me?"

"These thoughts excite me dreadfully," she continued. "Let us banish them, if you would have peace visit me in dying."

"May your death be far away yet," he sighed.

"Ah! I trust so! A little longer—a few days with you and my

dear child!" And the count clasped his hands together as he silently echoed her prayer.

"Will you reach me my lazuli casket?" she continued. "I have put a few trinkets into it, to leave as tokens of remembrance. I must show you how I wish them bestowed."

He rose from his seat, and looked about the room; but he could not find the jewel-case.

"The small one, Giovanni," she said; "not my diamond casket. I thought it was in the mosaic cabinet. Or perhaps they may have taken it into my dressing-room."

He went into the adjoining apartment, and had found the missing casket, when a wild shriek from her lips smote upon his ear. In an instant he had gained the bedside, and was supporting her. The attendants came running in.

"My dearest Adelaide! What is it that excites you thus?"

But his inquiries were in vain. She lay in his arms sobbing convulsively, and clinging to him in some terrible fear. Broken words came from her at length.

"I looked up—when you were away—and saw—there, in that darkened recess—*her*. I did—I did, Giovanni!"

"Whom?" he said, becoming very pale.

"Her—Gina Montani. She was in white—a long dress it seemed Oh! Giovanni, leave me not again."

"I will never leave you, Adelaide. But, this—it must have been a fancy—an illusion of the imagination. We had just been speaking of her."

"You remember," she sobbed, "the night our child died—nurse saw her also. It may——"

The lady's voice failed her, and her husband started, for a rapid change was taking place in her countenance.

"I am dying, Giovanni," she uttered, clinging to him, and trembling to the utmost extent of nervous terror. "Oh, support me! A doctor—a priest—Father Anselmo—where are they? He would give me absolution, he said: then why does the remembrance come back again now? It would not have been done without my sanction. Giovanni, my husband—protect and love our child—desert him never. Giovanni, where are you? My sight is going—Giovanni——"

Her voice died away, and the count bowed his head down in his anguish, whilst the attendants pressed forward to look at her countenance. The Lady Adelaide had passed from amongst the living.

VI.

It was many years after the death of the Lady Adelaide, that several workmen were engaged making some extensive alterations in the Castle

of Visinara, preparatory to the second marriage of its lord, who was about to espouse the lovely Elena di Capella. They were taking down the walls of a remote passage, or corridor, leading out of the chapel.

Standing, looking on, was the count, still to all appearance youthful, though he was in reality some years past thirty. By his side stood a fair boy of seven years old. It was the heir of Visinara. He was an open-hearted, engaging child, with a smiling countenance, on which might be traced his father's features, whilst he had inherited his mother's soft blue eyes and her sunny hair.

"What a long while you are!" exclaimed the child boyishly impatient to see the walls come down. "You should hit harder."

"The walls are very thick, Alberto," observed his father. "All these niches, which have been blocked up, and in the olden time contained statues, have to come down also."

"They are taking down a niche now, are they not, papa?"

"Not yet. They are removing the wall which has been built before it. It appears fresher, too, than the rest; of more recent date."

"It seems extraordinarily fresh, Sir Count," observed one of the workmen. "The materials are old, but it has certainly been rebuilt within a few years—within ten, I should say."

"Not it," laughed the count. "These corridors have not been touched during my lifetime."

"This portion of them has, my lord, you may rely upon it."

As the workman spoke, the remainder came down with a tremendous crash, leaving the niche exposed to view. There was no statue there—but the corpse of the unfortunate Gina Montani, standing upright in her night-dress, was revealed to their sight. It was nearly as fresh as if she had departed but yesterday, having been excluded from the air. The features, it is true, were scarcely to be recognised, but the hair—the long brown curls falling on her neck—was the same as ever.

This was her horrible death, then—to be walled up alive.

The Count di Visinara grew sick and faint as he gazed. Before he had time to collect his startled thoughts, the child was pulling at his arm.

"Papa, take me away. What is that dreadful thing there? You look white and cold, too, not as you always do. Oh, what is it? Dear dear papa, take me from here."

The workmen were affrighted, and shook with fear—perhaps more frightened though less shocked than the count. But one of them, partially recovering himself, touched the corpse with an implement he had been using for his work, and down it came, a heap of dust.

The Lord of Visinara turned, and with steps that tottered under him, bore his child back to the castle.

VII.

You may hear in Italy, unto this day, various versions of this tradition. One will tell you that the Lord of Visinara offered moneys and treasures, even to the half of his possessions, unto the fathers of the church, if they would lay the troubled spirit of Gina Montani; but that, although the monks tried hard, they could not do it. Another version goes, that the church did not try, because she had died a heretic. However that may have been, all agree in one respect—that the ghost *was not* laid. That it never would be, and never could be, but still wanders to haunt the descendants of the Lady Adelaide.

Several of these descendants still exist in Tuscany, though greatly reduced in station. And the accredited belief is, that whenever death is going to remove one of them, the spirit of the ill-fated Gina Montani appears and shows itself to them when they are dying.

"WE SPEND OUR YEARS AS A TALE THAT IS TOLD."

The book is closed, yet still the heart throbs high
With all the passion kindled at the fire
Which burned along the page. The yearning eye
Can scarce look up from weeping o'er the pyre
Of the dear close-clasped volume, to inqu
What the new story has to tell, or why
The fair creations only breathe to die,
And never may fulfil the soul's desire.
The tale is told, and so pass on our years,
Enjoyed, regretted, presently forgot,
Except where memory shrines some sacred spot
In tender light, no longer dimmed by tears.
So pass they, and must pass till time shall be
Lost in the fulness of Eternity.

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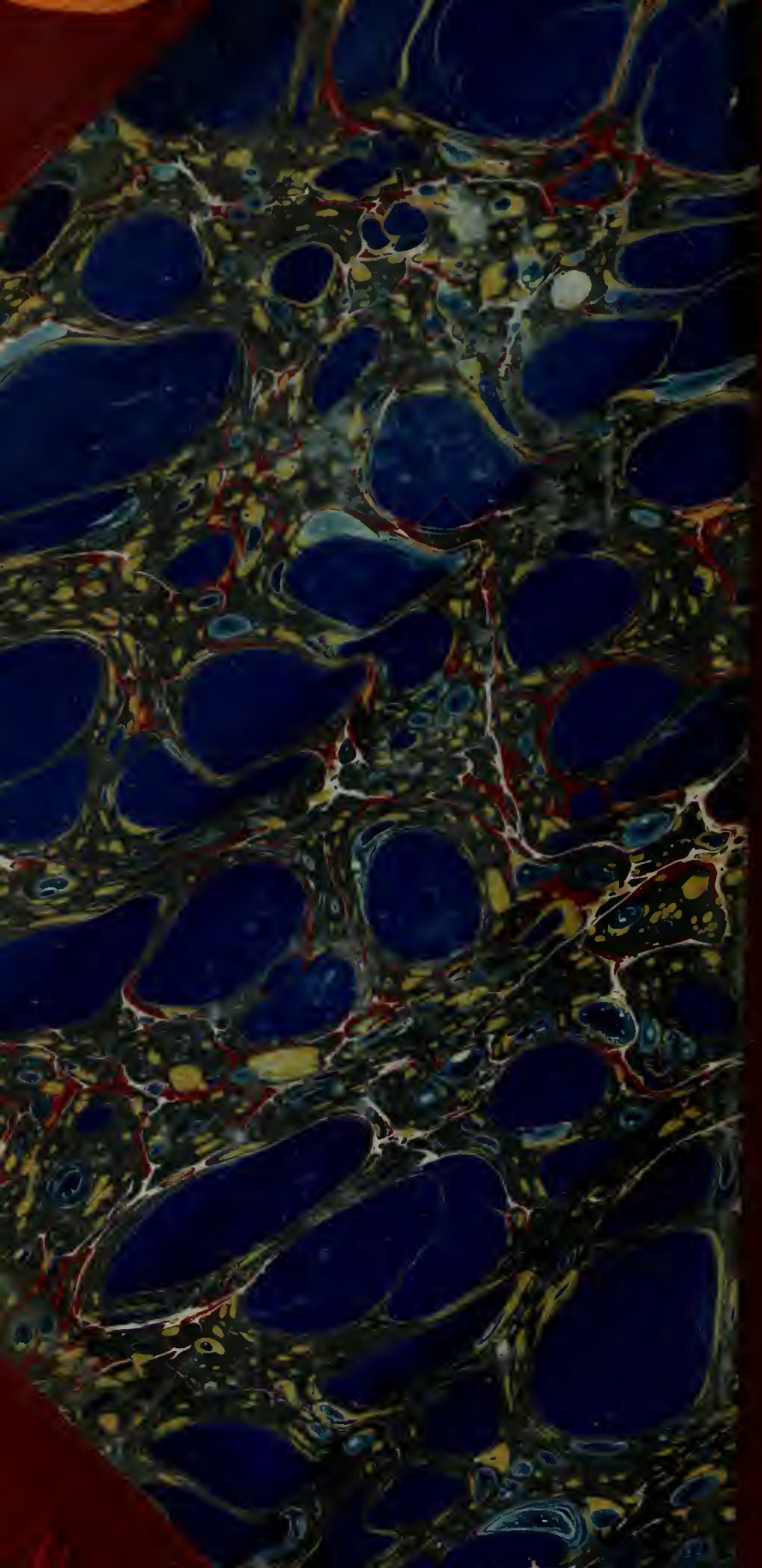
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